


10¢ PER COPY SATURDAY NOV. 2 BY THE YEAR \$4.00

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

An illustration of a woman in a red dress and a man in a blue shirt. The woman is standing, wearing a red headscarf, a red dress with a gold belt, and multiple gold bracelets. She is holding a gold chain in her right hand. The man is kneeling or sitting on the ground, looking up at her with a surprised expression. The background is a textured, light-colored surface.

The Pirate Woman

by Captain Dingle

A Breathless
Romance
of the
Caribbean

Daniel Low & Co.

Jewelers since 1867

Fireside Shopping



—direct
to you

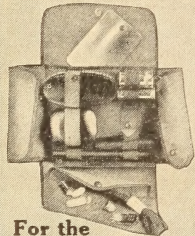


For the Family

Service Ring, solid gold, finely enamelled. State size and stars (1, 2 or 3)
E-996 \$3.00

For the Knitter

Measuring Needles—Sock Set; (4) white celluloid, 6 in. measure engraved on needle. 3 letter monogram in red and blue engraved on white tips.
N-2077 \$1.25



For the Soldier Khaki Service Set; toilet fittings; sewing kit; pocket for stationery.
L1394 \$6.50

Shopping the Daniel Low way, sitting comfortably at home, saving energy, time and money, with thousands of useful and unusual articles to select from, is the most satisfactory shopping tour imaginable.

There is no safer way to buy than the Daniel Low way of "Fireside Shopping." For 50 years the name "Daniel Low" has been—and always will be—a guarantee of **you must be satisfied or money refunded.**

When you order one or more of the articles shown here, ask for the Daniel Low "Book of Ten Thousand Suggestions." This "Wonderful Store" is a 184-page volume, picturing hundreds of useful things for the holidays and birthdays—not jewelry alone but leather, toilet and desk articles, traveling bags and cases, stationery—all pictured, described, everything priced (at a decided reduction from usual prices)—and every article fully guaranteed.

Mail Coupon for "The Book of Ten Thousand Suggestions"

DANIEL LOW & CO.
229 Town House Square

Salem, Mass.

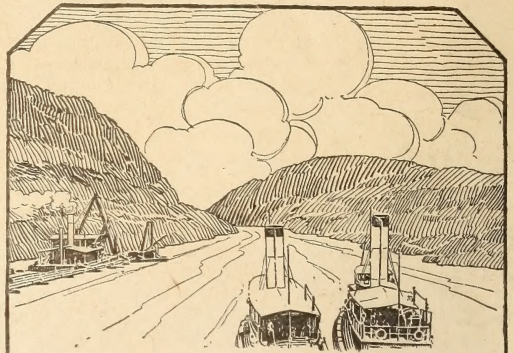
Daniel Low & Co.
229 Town House Square
Salem, Mass.

Please send me your "Book of 10,000 Suggestions"

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....



How Is Your "Culebra Cut"?

The Panama Canal is a clear passage-way as far as the Culebra Cut. But Gold Hill has a way of slipping into the cut. And until dredges can clear the channel, the industrial schedule of the world is out of gear.

If engineers tried to blast out the slide from Culebra Cut they would have more slides to cope with. If you try to blast out accumulated waste from *your* Culebra Cut with pills, salts or purges, you will increase your constipation—and next time you will have to take stronger medicine in a larger dose.

You can't dredge *your* canal

You can clean it out with Nujol

Nujol softens the mass, and supplies the intestinal canal with sufficient moisture to replace deficient mucus. It causes the obstructive waste matter to pass gently out of your system at a regular hour, absorbing and removing the poisons as it goes. Nujol regularly keeps the traffic of your mind and body operating on schedule

You admire the Panama Canal system. Why not safeguard your own? Write for free booklet, "Thirty Feet of Danger."

Warning:

NUJOL is sold only in sealed bottles bearing the Nujol Trade Mark. All druggists in U. S. and Canada. Insist on Nujol. You may suffer from substitutes.

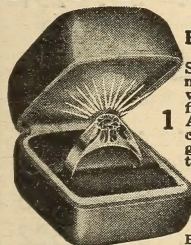
Nujol Laboratories
STANDARD OIL CO. (NEW JERSEY)
50 Broadway, New York



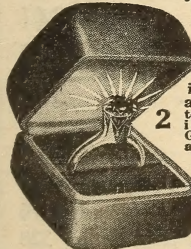


FREE
For 10 Days Wear

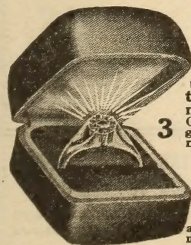
Put It Beside a Diamond



Flat Belcher Ring
Solid gold mounting, with wide flat band. Almost a carat, guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem. Price \$12.50; only \$3.50 on arrival. Balance \$3 per month.



Ladies' Ring
Solid gold mounting. Has a guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem almost a carat in size. Price \$12.50; only \$3.50 upon arrival. Balance \$3.00 a month.



Tooth Belcher Ring
Solid gold six-prong tooth mounting. Guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem, almost a carat in size. Price \$12.50; only \$3.50 upon arrival. Balance \$3 per month.

To quickly introduce into every locality our beautiful TIFNITE GEMS, we will absolutely and positively send them out FREE and on trial for 10 days' wear. In appearance and by every test, these wonderful gems are so much like a diamond that even an expert can hardly tell the difference. But only 10,000 will be shipped on this plan. To take advantage of it, you must act quickly.

Solid Gold Mountings

some solid gold mounting—after you have carefully made an examination and decided that you have a wonderful bargain and want to keep it, you can pay for it in such small payments that you'll hardly miss the money. If you can tell a TIFNITE GEM from a genuine diamond, or if, for any reason at all, you do not wish to keep it, return it at our expense.

Remarkable Gem Discovery

The closest thing to a diamond ever discovered. In appearance a TIFNITE and a diamond are as alike as two peas. TIFNITE GEMS have the wonderful pure white color of diamonds of the first water, the dazzling fire, brilliancy, cut and polish. Stand every diamond test—fire, acid and diamond file. Mountings are exclusively fashioned in latest designs—and guaranteed solid gold.

Send No Money

Just send coupon. Send no reference, no money, no obligation to you in any way! You run no risk. The coupon brings you any of the exquisitely beautiful rings shown and described here for 10 days' wear free. Be sure to enclose strip of paper showing exact finger measurement as explained.

Mail This Coupon

Send now and get a TIFNITE GEM on this liberal offer. Wear it for 10 days on trial. Every one set in latest style Solid gold mountings. Decide then whether you want to keep it or not. Send for yours now—today—sure. Send no money.

The Tifnite Gem Co.
Rand McNally Bldg.
Dept. 377 Chicago, Ill.

Send the coupon NOW! Send no money. Tell us which ring you prefer. We'll send it at once. After you see the beautiful, dazzling gem and the hand-

How to Order Rings To get the right size ring, cut a strip of heavy paper so that the ends exactly meet when drawn tightly around the second joint of finger on which you want to wear the ring. Be careful that the measuring paper fits snugly without overlapping, and measure at the second joint. Send the strip of paper to us with order coupon.

Mail This Coupon

THE TIFNITE GEM CO.

Rand McNally Bldg., Dept. 377 Chicago, Ill.

Send me Ring No. on 10 days' approval. (In ordering ring, be sure to enclose size as described above.) If satisfactory, I agree to pay \$3.50 upon arrival; and balance at rate of \$3.00 per month. If not satisfactory, I will return same within ten days at your expense.

Name.....

Address.....

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOLUME XC

NUMBER 2



CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER 2, 1918



The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission.

FIVE CONTINUED STORIES

The Pirate Woman	Captain Dingle	193
A Four-Part Story — Part One		
Safe and Sane (A "Different" Serial)	Tod Robbins	277
A Three-Part Story — Part Two		
White Tigers	Perley Poore Sheehan	303
A Five-Part Story — Part Three		
The Silver Cipher	Freeman Putney, Jr.	329
A Four-Part Story — Part Four		
Lady of the Night Wind	Varick Vanardy	347
A Six-Part Story — Part Five		

TWO NOVELETTES

Bibi—His Mark	Achmed Abdullah	218
Bob Bowen Comes to Town	H. Bedford-Jones	251

SEVEN SHORT STORIES

Ivan Samakoff's Hand (A "Different" Story)	Richard Hudson	214
Captain of His Soul	Herman Howard Matteson	239
The Patteran	Dixie Willson	296
That Sharp Yankee	Raymond S. Spears	322
An Unwilling Pythias	C. Sharpe	341
Winning Rosemary Burke	Wolcott Le Cl��ar Beard	367
Mind Prints	Laura M. Williams	378

VERSE

The Golden Sword	William F. Kirk	217	The Way of Love	Arthur Wallace Peach	276
Pilgrims	Edna Valentine Trapnell	250	The Tickle-Toe	Joseph Bernard Rethy	328
Reciprocity			Charles Bendix		366

Heart to Heart Talks	The Editor	381
--------------------------------	----------------------	-----

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

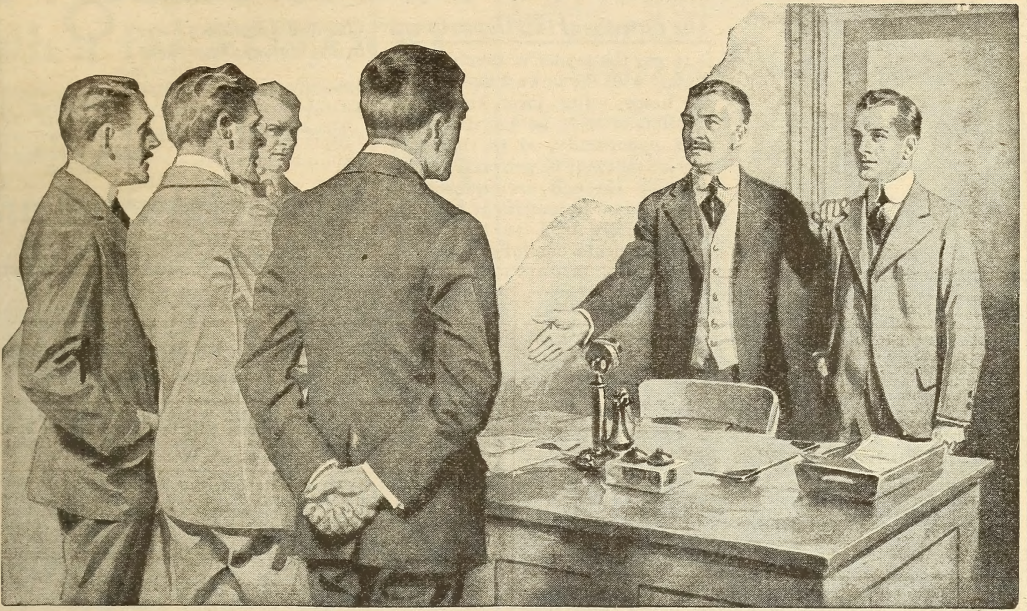
RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$6.00 to Canada, and \$7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY. COPYRIGHT, 1918.

Entered as second class matter May 17, 1915, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.



“We Need More Men Like Joe”

“Men, we are giving Joe a better position and a good increase in salary. He deserves it. Joe looked ahead of his job. He studied during his spare time with the International Correspondence Schools and today he *knows*, forwards and backwards, just the things he *must* know to hold down the job he is going into. I’m telling you this because there are *other* positions here for men who know. We need *more* men like Joe.”

Are you looking ahead of your job? Are you using your spare time in getting ready for something better? If not, now is the time to begin. Don’t delay. Don’t put it off. Lincoln said to himself, “I will study and get ready and sometime my chance will come.” It did. Your chance will come, too. Be ready for it. Study. Train yourself. You can do it at home, in spare time, through the I. C. S., just as more than 100,000 men are doing right now. You have every chance they have. You needn’t sacrifice an hour or a dollar from your present work. Simply use your spare moments.

Every shop, factory, store and office needs its “Joe.” Wherever you are, whatever your chosen line of work, if you *know* what you want to become, the I. C. S. will help you. Let us show you what we are doing for others and what we can do for you. The way to find out is easy. Use this coupon. Use it now. You will never regret it. Choose your career from the list it contains, then mark and mail it today.

International Correspondence Schools
SCRANTON, PA. MONTREAL, CAN.

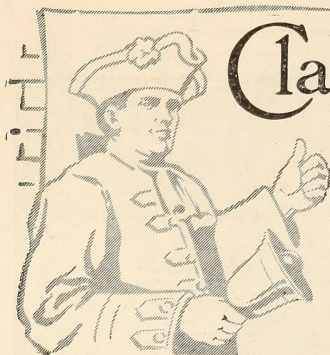
TEAR OUT HERE INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS BOX 2187, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> SALESMANSHIP |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting and Railways | <input type="checkbox"/> ADVERTISING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Window Trimmer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card Writer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Sign Painter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MECHANICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Trainman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> ILLUSTRATING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating | <input type="checkbox"/> BOOKKEEPER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer and Typist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Cert. Public Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> TRAFFIC MANAGER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metallurgist or Prospector | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STATIONARY ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD ENGLISH |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ship Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECT | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL SERVICE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOBILE OPERATING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PLUMBING AND HEATING | <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Repairing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Overseer or Supt. | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHEMIST | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Raising <input type="checkbox"/> French <input type="checkbox"/> Italian |

Name _____
Present Occupation _____
Street and No. _____
City _____ State _____

Canadians may send this coupon to
International Correspondence Schools, Montreal, Can.



Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines:

	Line Rate	Combination Line Rate
Munsey's Magazine	\$1.50	\$1.00
THE ARGOSY COMBINATION		Less 3% cash discount
The Argosy	1.50	
All-story Weekly		
Railroad Man's Magazine	1.00	

Nov. 30th Argosy Combination Forms Close Nov. 2nd.

"A New Force In Business" is a booklet that tells how to advertise successfully in the Classified Department of the Munsey Magazines. Mailed anywhere on request.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

MARVELOUS NEW WINNER—The Daylite Mantle Oil Light. Different from all others. Better light than electricity. Five times more efficient than common lamps. Uses ordinary kerosene. Burns over 50 hours on 1 gallon. Guaranteed five years. To show it is to sell it. Experience unnecessary. We furnish stock of lamps on 30 days credit to reliable men. Sample free. Exclusive territory. Write now for particulars. Daylite Co., 701 Daylite Bldg., Chicago.

AMERICAN MILITARY STYLES ARE ALL THE RAGE in men's tailored to measure suits this season. Easiest to sell; everybody wants them. Far ahead of all others in real class and beauty. Lowest prices—less than common ready-made suits. Our agents are coining money. You can earn \$10 daily. Send for full particulars, terms and sample book of styles and patterns. American Woolen Mills Co., Dept. 901, Chicago, Ill.

FREE CATALOGUE, BIGGEST AND BEST LINE TOILET SPECIALTIES, Remedies, Soaps, Extracts. Liberal Terms. Write today. Western Laboratories, 1951 W. Van Buren St., Chicago.

AGENTS—STEADY INCOME. LARGE MANUFACTURER of Handkerchiefs and Dress Goods, etc., wishes representative in each locality. Factory to consumer. Big profits, honest goods. Whole or spare time. Credit given. Send for particulars. Freeport Mfg. Co., 23 Main St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

AGENTS—MAKE BIG PROFITS selling our extracts, perfumes, cold creams, face powders, spices, medicines, etc. Beautiful high-grade line. Exclusive territory. Sample soap free. Lacassian Company, Dept. 114, St. Louis, Mo.

\$65.00 A WEEK AND YOUR SUIT FREE—If you take advantage of our startling offer. Write us at once, and we will send you a full line of samples and everything necessary to start at once, absolutely free, postage prepaid. Spencer Mead Company, Dept. 1190, Chicago.

AGENTS—2 in 1 Reversible Raincoat. Two coats in one. One side a handsome black raincoat, reverse side fine dress coat. Something new. Not sold in stores. Steam vulcanized. Guaranteed waterproof. Big seller. All styles and sizes for men, women and children. Write for agency. Guaranteed Raincoat Co., 1507 North St., Dayton, Ohio.

BIG MONEY SELLING OUR "ROLL OF HONOR" illustrated certificate with oval space for soldier's photo. Also 40 latest patriotic pictures. Sells on sight. Patriotic Certificate Co., Dept. 942, 160 N. Wells Street, Chicago.

HELP WANTED

BE A DETECTIVE—EARN \$150.00 TO \$300.00 MONTHLY. Easy work; we show you; open to all; experience unnecessary. Full particulars mailed to you. Write Wagner, 186 East 79th St., New York, Department 206.

BE A DETECTIVE—EARN FROM \$150.00 TO \$300.00 PER MONTH. Travel over the world. Write C. T. Ludwig, 126 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

WANTED IMMEDIATELY—MEN, WOMEN, 18 or over. \$100 month. Thousands U. S. Government War Positions open. Write immediately for free list. Franklin Institute, Dept. W-1, Rochester, N. Y.

DO YOU WANT AGENTS AND SALESMEN to sell your merchandise? Men and women who are educated in personal salesmanship and know the house-to-house, office, and store canvassing proposition. These advertisers are getting them year in and year out, and there are thousands more for you among the 5,000,000 readers of The Munsey Magazines. Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

PHOTOPLAYS WANTED BY 48 COMPANIES; \$10 TO \$500 EACH PAID FOR PLAYS. No correspondence course or experience needed; details sent free to beginners. Sell your ideas. Producers League, 388 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS THAT PROTECT. HIGHEST REFERENCES. Best results. Promptness assured. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

IDEAS WANTED. THEY BRING WEALTH IF PATENTED. Send postal for Needed Inventions, List of Patent Buyers and Guide Book. Tells How to Secure Patent through our Credit Plan. Randolph & Co., 630 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS—Write for How to Obtain a Patent, list of Patent Buyers, and Inventions Wanted. \$1,000,000 in prizes offered for inventions. Send sketch for free opinion as to patentability. Our Four Books sent free upon request. Patents advertised Free. Victor J. Evans Co., Patent Attys., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

FREE TO WRITERS—a wonderful little book of money-making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your copy now! Just address Writers' Service, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC., ARE WANTED FOR PUBLICATION. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss. or write Literary Bureau, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

SOMETHING NEW—Service and Protection to scenario writers. We revise, criticize, copyright and synopsize. Advice free. Not a school. Universal Scenario Corporation, Dept. 72, Los Angeles, Calif.

REAL ESTATE—FARM LANDS

MICHIGAN

HARDWOOD LAND IN MICHIGAN'S BEST COUNTIES. 10, 20, 40, 80 acre tracts. \$15 to \$30 per acre. Easy payments. Free insurance. No taxes for five years to settlers. Money loaned to erect buildings and make improvements. Good for general crops, poultry, fruit. Big booklet free. Swigart Land Company, 11245 First National Bank Building, Chicago, Ill.



PANTS

TO MEASURE

ONLY \$2.95

1½ Year's Satisfaction or Money Back

Fine hand tailoring. Choice of many snappy, smart fabrics for dress or business wear. You save one half. Every penny back quick any time you are not well pleased.

NO EXTRAS—WE PAY EXPRESS

No strings to this offer. Not a penny extra for anything. We even prepay all postage and express.

FREE COLD PIN

Classy lapel pin free with your first order to show you are a regular agent. Send quick—supply limited.

Cash Profits

Your friends will buy on sight at our low prices. Our agents get up to \$75 a week, cash for spare time. You can do it easy. Write quick for BIG, new sample outfit to choose from, and our astonishing offer FREE. Do it NOW.

CHICAGO TAILORS ASSOCIATION

Dept. E-445, 515 South Franklin Street, CHICAGO

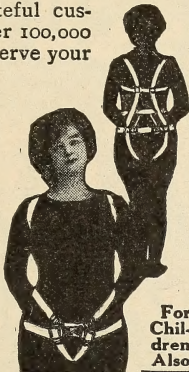
"I Would Not Part with it for \$10,000"

So writes an enthusiastic, grateful customer. In like manner testify over 100,000 people who have worn it. Conserve your body and life *first*.

The Natural Body Brace

Overcomes **WEAKNESS** and **ORGANIC AILMENTS** of **WOMEN AND MEN**. Develops **erect, graceful figure**.

Brings restful relief, comfort, ability to do things, health and strength.



For Children Also

Wear It 30 Days Free at Our Expense

Does away with the strain and pain of standing and walking; replaces and supports misplaced internal organs; reduces enlarged abdomen; straightens and strengthens the back; corrects stooping shoulders; develops lungs, chest and bust; relieves backache, curvatures, nervousness, ruptures, constipation. Comfortable and easy to wear.

Keep Yourself Fit

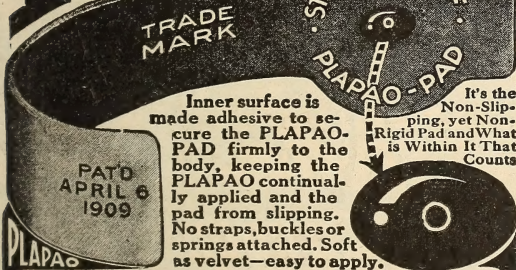
Write today for illustrated booklet, measurement blank, etc., and read our very liberal proposition.

HOWARD C. RASH, Pres. Natural Body Brace Co.
227 Rash Building SALINA, KANSAS

STOP USING A TRUSS

Do Away With Steel And Rubber Bands

FREE TRIAL



Inner surface is made adhesive to secure the **PLAPAO-PAD** firmly to the body, keeping the **PLAPAO** continually applied and the pad from slipping. No straps, buckles or springs attached. Soft as velvet—easy to apply.

FREE to 5,000 Truss Sufferers
To the extent of 5,000 Sufferers who may apply, I will send, **ABSOLUTELY FREE**, a sufficient quantity of the **Plapao** to positively convince them that this is the only logical, common-sense way of treating rupture. **Plapao** is a highly astringent medication placed within the **Plapao-Pad** and being absorbed through the skin, creates a wonderful feeling of relief and at the same time tends to strengthen the weakened muscles and thus permanently close the rupture opening. The process of recovery is natural, so you'll have no use for a truss—you can throw it away forever! Old and young have testified under oath that the **Plapao-Pads** cured their rupture—many of them long-standing, aggravated cases—without delay from work. Patent allowed in U. S. and foreign countries. Awarded Gold Medal at Rome and Grand Prix at Paris.

Send No Money—for a sufficient quantity of the **Plapao** is sent without charge to enable you to give it a thorough test; you pay nothing for this trial now or ever. Write for it and full information today. Address **Plapao Laboratories, Block 1729 St. Louis, Mo.**

GIRLS—WOMEN WANTED!

AGE 18 OR OVER.

\$90.00 to \$150.00 Month.

U.S. Government Needs Thousands Immediately

Easy, pleasant office positions; filing, writing, listing and similar work in the Army, Navy, State, Ordnance, War Risk Insurance and other departments of the Government at Washington, D. C. Similar positions in Government offices in practically every city in the country.

Office Experience Unnecessary. Common Sense Education Sufficient.

Your country needs your help in properly carrying on the work of the war. This is your chance to do your bit, and at the same time earn a salary of from \$1100 to \$1800 a year.

Fill out and mail the attached coupon.

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE

Dept. W-99
ROCHESTER, N. Y.

We will immediately send you full description of the positions open to you, with an idea of the work, hours, vacation, salaries, and date of the next examination in your section.

DO IT TODAY, TOMORROW MAY BE TOO LATE!

Name.....
Address.....



In '65

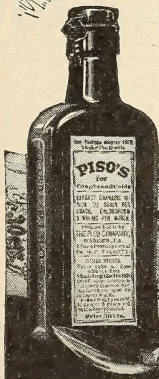
when grandpa marched home from war, **Piso's** was an old favorite. Today it is more popular and more widely used than ever.

Piso's gives prompt and effective relief. Soothes inflamed throats; eases tickling and relieves hoarseness.

Ask your druggist for **Piso's**—the old favorite.

Contains No Opiate

Safe for
Young and
Old



PISO'S

for Coughs & Colds



Tobacco Habit BANISHED

in 48 to 72 Hours

Immediate Results

Trying to quit the tobacco habit unaided is a losing fight against heavy odds, and means a serious shock to your nervous system. So don't try it! Make the tobacco habit quit you. It will quit you if you will just take Tobacco Redeemer according to directions.

It doesn't make a particle of difference whether you've been a user of tobacco for a single month or for 50 years, or how much you use, or in what form you use it. Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff Tobacco Redeemer will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in from 48 to 72 hours. Your tobacco craving will begin to decrease after the very first dose—there's no long waiting for results.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind and is the most marvelously quick, absolutely scientific and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer is in no sense a substitute for tobacco, but is a radical, efficient treatment. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It quiets the nerves, and will make you feel better in every way. If you really want to quit the tobacco habit—get rid of it so completely that when you see others using it, it will not awaken the slightest desire in you—you should at once begin a course of Tobacco Redeemer treatment for the habit.

Results Absolutely Guaranteed

A single trial will convince the most skeptical. Our legal, binding, money-back guarantee goes with each full treatment. If Tobacco Redeemer fails to banish the tobacco habit when taken according to the plain and easy directions, your money will be cheerfully refunded upon demand.

Let Us Send You Convincing Proof

If you're a slave of the tobacco habit and want to find a sure, quick way of quitting "for keeps" you owe it to yourself and to your family to mail the coupon below or send your name and address on a postal and receive our free booklet, and positive proof that Tobacco Redeemer will quickly free you from the habit.

Newell Pharmacal Company
Dept. 320, St. Louis, Mo.



Mail Coupon NOW for FREE Booklet

NEWELL PHARMACAL CO.,
Dept. 320, St. Louis, Mo.

Please send, without obligating me in any way, your free booklet regarding the tobacco habit and proof that Tobacco Redeemer will positively free me from the tobacco habit.

Name

Street and No.

Town..... State.....

WHITING-ADAMS

BRUSHES

Several Reasons for Buying WHITING-ADAMS

Vulcan Rubber Cemented Brushes

1st. The bristles and hair are highest grade, prepared for use by the WHITING-ADAMS method, which retains toughness, elasticity and a velvet softness of ends. This makes the part of a brush that is used, perfect in quality and long wearing.

2nd. Every bristle and hair is held by pure, best quality Rubber; no fake, coal tar, chemical imitation of rubber is used in our factory. "Rubber" means pure rubber in all WHITING-ADAMS Vulcan Rubber Cemented Brushes. The butts of bristles or hair are completely saturated and surrounded with strictly pure rubber in semi-liquid state, and then vulcanized hard as granite.

3rd. WHITING-ADAMS Brushes cost little and wear long. Our large volume of business reduces cost of manufacture to lowest point, and selling prices are made near to cost.

4th. Manufacturing Brushes as we have for over 106 years, means that we know brushes, and users of our brushes receive the full benefit of our brush knowledge.

Send for Illustrated Literature

JOHN L. WHITING - J. J. ADAMS CO.
BOSTON, U. S. A.

Whiting-Adams Brushes Awarded Gold Medal and Official Blue Ribbon, the Highest Award at Panama-Pacific Exposition, 1915.

Deafness



Perfect hearing is now being restored in every condition of deafness or defective hearing from causes such as Catarrhal Deafness, Relaxed or Sunken Drums, Thickened Drums, Roaring and Hissing Sounds, Perforated, Wholly or Partially Destroyed Drums, Discharge from Ears, etc.

Wilson Common-Sense Ear Drums

"Little Wireless Phones for the Ears"

require no medicine but effectively replace what is lacking or defective in the natural ear drums. They are simple devices, which the wearer easily fits into the ears where they are invisible. Soft, safe and comfortable.

Write today for our 168-page FREE book on DEAFNESS, giving you full particulars and testimonials.

WILSON EAR DRUM CO., Incorporated

193 Inter-Southern Building, LOUISVILLE, KY.

Learn Mechanics of AVIATION

Aviation Mechanics needed for New Positions. Write to-day. Amazing opportunities in the Airplane Industry. Government needs thousands of men; fit yourself for greatest service. We announce a new correspondence course in practical aeronautics and principles of aeronautical construction and engineering. Write at once. Limited number of reduced scholarships now available.

American School of Aviation, 431 S. Dearborn St., Dept. 108-B, Chicago

Wrestling Book FREE



Learn to be an expert wrestler. Know scientific wrestling, self-defense, and jiu-jitsu. Develop a splendid physique, and have perfect health. Join this popular school and learn by mail. The famous world's champions—the marvel us

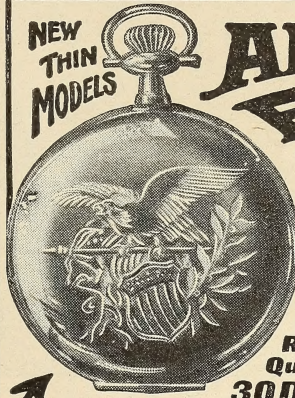
Frank Gotch and Farmer Burns

offer you a wonderful opportunity. Wrestling is easily and quickly learned at home by mail. Men and boys write now for a splendid free book. Learn all the science and tricks. Be able to handle big men with ease. Accept this wonderful offer NOW. Send for free book today, stating your age.

Farmer Burns School of Wrestling, 1078 Range Bldg., Omaha, Neb.

NOW!

NEW
THIN
MODELS



ANY WATCH EASY TERMS

Elgin—Illinois
Hamilton and
South Bend

Lowest Prices!

Newest Liberty

Rich Gold Cases

Quick Shipments

30 Day Free Trial

Send No Money!

Just tell us the Watch you want. We have it for you in any style or any grade. We make lower prices and more liberal terms than any other House in the country. Send your name and address and we will send you our Free Catalog and Monthly Cut Price Bulletin, showing all kinds of Watches, Diamonds, Jewelry, etc.

Sent on Approval You do not risk a cent. Every article guaranteed in writing. Your selection will be sent on 30 days' approval. No red tape—No security—No interest. A new deal for square people. Your name on a postal will do.

We operate a chain of Branch Stores and if you answer at once we will send you "Ad" showing our Big Special Watch Sale now going on.

HARRIS-GOAR CO., Dept. 333 Kansas City, Mo.

We Do As We Advertise.

Short Story Writers Wanted!

There is a tremendous demand for short stories, photo plays, magazine and newspaper articles. 24,868 publications buy short stories. \$3,000.00 a year is a small income for a writer. You can be successful. Jack London said so. He and other great writers have endorsed our course. Learn at home during your spare time. Write Today for FREE BOOK. Our free book, "How to Write," tells you about it; also gives details of the special introductory offer that is being made for a limited time. Don't lose this opportunity. Write today.

Hoozier Institute Short Story Dept., Dept. 1078, Fort Wayne, Ind.

CLASS PINS

CLASS OR SOCIETY CATALOG FREE

Either pin illustrated made with any 3 letters

and 2 figures, Enamelled Red-White-Blue.

Silver plate 20¢ ea., \$2.00 doz. Sterling

silver, 35¢ ea. \$3.50 doz.

BASTIAN BROS. CO.

767 Bastian Bldg., Rochester, N. Y.



PARKER'S HAIR BALSAM

A toilet preparation of merit.

Helps to eradicate dandruff.

For Restoring Color and

Beauty to Gray and Faded Hair.

50c. and \$1.00 at druggists.

HINDER CORNS Removes Corns, Callouses, etc., stops all pain, ensures comfort to the feet, makes walking easy. 15 cents by mail or at Druggists. Hixco Chemical Works, Patchogue, N. Y.



Make This Job Yours

The difference between the men on the high stools and the man in the private office is simply **training**. The men outside stopped when they arrived at the bookkeeping stage. While they reached their limit here, he became a Higher Accountant. Now he has "arrived" as an executive.

Spare time training gave this man a mastery of business analysis and organization. He charts the condition of the business and shows officers and directors in figures where they can save, where they can apply more efficient methods and where every department stands all the time.

Thousands of men like him are wanted by our great corporations. Financiers and business men pay big fees and salaries to have conditions accurately shown. Incomes of Higher Accountants range from \$3,000 to \$10,000 a year or more. And now the government demands accurate income reports. The Expert Accountant's service here may save embarrassment and heavy expense.

Train By Mail

You can master Higher Accounting in your leisure time, while you hold your present position. The LaSalle method will train you by mail under the direct supervision of William B. Castenholz, A. M., C. P. A., Former Comptroller and Instructor, University of Illinois, assisted by a staff of Certified Public Accountants including

members of the American Institute of Accountants. These experts will instruct you in the very methods they use in their own work.

Under the thorough coaching of these experts, you will be thoroughly drilled in the underlying principles of modern Business Analysis and Organization, Accounting, Auditing, Cost Accounting, Commercial Law and Financial Management. LaSalle accountancy training will qualify you to pass the C. P. A. examinations, to hold an executive position, or to enter business as an Expert Consulting Accountant. Membership also includes free use of our Consulting Service which brings advice whenever needed on special business problems. No large fees; no large amount to pay down. This instruction is offered on a convenient monthly payment plan.

Send the Coupon

Already over 145,000 business men have profited from LaSalle training. More than 20,000 enroll annually in our various courses. You, too; can get the benefits offered by our organization of 800 people including 300 business experts, instructors, text writers and assistants.

Send today for information about this course which has helped so many men to rise. The coupon will also bring our valuable book, "Ten Years' Promotion In One". Write for your copy now. It's free.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

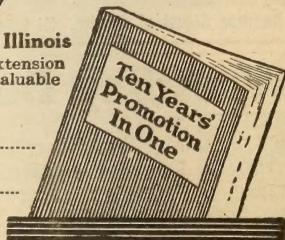
Dept. 1132-HA "The World's Greatest Extension University" Chicago, Illinois

Without cost or obligation on my part, please send me particulars regarding your Extension Course of Training in Higher Accounting and your Consulting Service. Also a copy of your valuable book for ambitious men, "Ten Years' Promotion In One."

Name.....

Present Position.....

Address.....



ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOL. XC

NUMBER 2



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1918



The Pirate Woman by Captain Dingle

Author of "The Coolie Ship," "Steward of the Westward," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE CAVE OF TERRIBLE THINGS.

A GREAT unrest brooded over mountain and forest; the blue Caribbean lay hushed and glaring, as if held in leash by a power greater than that which ordered its daily ebb and flow.

Men moved or stood beneath the trees on the cliffside in attitudes of supreme awe or growing uneasiness, according to their kind: for among them were numbered Spaniard and Briton, creole and mulatto, Carib and octoroon, with coal-black negroes enough to outnumber all the rest—and it was upon these last that profound awe sat oppressively.

Apart, followed by a hundred furtive eyes, Dolores, daughter of Red Jabez, ranged back and forth before the mighty rock portals of the Cave of Terrible Things, like some magnificent tigress hedged with foes. Beyond those portals Red Jabez, Sultan of pirates, arbiter of life and death over the motley community, lay at grips with the grim specter to whom he had consigned scores far more readily than he now

yielded up his own red-stained soul. Red Jabez was dying a death as hard as his lurid life had been.

Beyond those rock portals none save Jabez and Milo, the herculean Abyssinian slave, had ever passed. Dolores, next in line, was in ignorance as deep as her meanest slave, concerning what lay beyond the great mass of rock which formed the door, and which Milo alone could move. She knew, as did every one, that the great chamber of Red Jabez held some vast mystery; she suspected, as did the rest, that it concealed wealth beyond dreams; deep down in her soul she hoped that inviolate chamber held for her the means of emancipation; but of this hope, none knew save herself. For Queen of Night though the white men called her, Sultana though she was named with fear and submission by the blacks, though her power was second only to that of Red Jabez, and barely less than his, a canker gnawed at the heart of Dolores, the canker of a suspicion that her power was but a paltry power, her freedom but a caged freedom.

Somewhere beyond the great ocean that

stretched away before her eyes lay a world she knew nothing of; yet since her earliest childhood her keen mind had told her that the silk with which she was clothed, the jewels that encrusted her dagger-hilt, the ships whose pillage had yielded up these things, must come from lands far distant, more desirable than the maroon country of Jamaica. More, her ears attuned to the whisper or roar of the sea, the sigh or shriek of the winds, carried to her the mutterings of men long held in leash, who now saw in their chieftain's death the realization of their own wild dreams of riches and release. All these things told her that the great, strange world beyond the sea-line was something for her to strive for; not for the rabble who called her queen.

She paced back and forth, a splendidly lithe, glowing creature of beauty and passion, every movement a grace, each grace such as befitted a royal woman conscious of mental and physical perfection. Her hair surrounded her face and shoulders in a lustrous, rippling cloud, through which peeped a bare arm and breast stolen from the goddess of beauty; her tunic of quilted Chinese silk hung from one shoulder by a strap fashioned from the ribbon of the Star of Persia, and fastened by the star; her strong, slender waist was girdled with a heavy gold cord that supported a long, thin dagger, no toy, in a jeweled sheath; the hem of her single garment rang with gold sequins to the movement of her smoothly muscular knees; her high-arched feet were protected from thorns and shells by sandals of red leather.

As the moments passed, and no sign came from within the cave, Dolores restrained her impatience with increasing difficulty. The men scattered around were not of such stuff; they felt the impending crisis settle heavily upon them, and white and black alike drew together for the comfort of close touch. From time to time a hardier spirit uttered his thoughts aloud, yet always with a glance of uncertainty toward Dolores. They had reason to glance that way; for every man had tasted of the queen's justice, which rarely erred on the side of mildness; many of them had experienced her terrible competence to carry out a sentence in person. Of them all, not one but knew that in

Dolores he owned as queen a woman who need yield nothing of prowess to any man: her knife was as swift, her round wrist as strong, her blazing violet-black eyes as sure as any among them. Not a man could ever forget the offending slave whom she had thrashed with her own hands, disdaining assistance, until the wretch tore loose and fled screaming to the cliff to pitch headlong into the shark-infested sea; nor could they forget her unhesitating dive and terrific struggle to recover him and her completion of the interrupted punishment when she had brought him back.

Yet the stress proved too great, even in face of these memories, and a tall, powerful Spaniard, heavily earringed, handsome, with a swart, brutal beauty, delivered a scorching oath to the heavy air and exclaimed fiercely:

"A curse on this babe's play! Must men stand here like whipped curs until a slave commands us enter? Come! Who'll follow me past that door? I'll know what lies behind this mummary if I choke it from old Jabez's withered neck as he dies."

The man stepped forward two paces, glaring defiantly at Dolores, waiting for men to follow. An uneasy shuffling of feet was his only answer for a moment; then his eyes shifted with cooling ardor at sight of Dolores. For a breath after he had ceased speaking, the girl stood like a splendid statue, except for the glitter of her eyes and a slight quivering of her limbs; it was as if she awaited some response; then her face relaxed into a contemptuous smile, and her crimson lips parted to reveal her even, gleaming teeth. She laughed, a rippling little laugh like the tinkle of steel links, and with a single gliding movement that permitted no avoidance she swept to within two feet of the now frightened ruffian.

"Yes? Yellow Rufe would choke words from a dying man!" she cried. "Nothing that lives and can stand on two feet is in danger from such as he. Peace, slavish dog!" she panted, flinging out a gleaming hand and seizing him by one earring. "Thus I mark curs that seek their food among the dead!" With the words Dolores's right hand flashed upward, knife-armed,

and across Rufe's cheek glared a crimson cross; into his eyes leaped the fear of death.

"Now go!" she said imperiously, pushing him away. "Let no man forget that while the life is in Red Jabez he holds thy lives in pawn. When his spirit goes, ye shall reckon with me!"

Rufe staggered away, half incredulous that his punishment had fallen short of death. His companions led him apart with many a backward glance of apprehension at the authoress of his discomfiture, and a deep, sullen muttering rippled through the crowd. Dolores resumed her solitary pacing without another thought for the hardy rascal she had so swiftly and effectively softened. Her eyes were ever bent toward the great rock; her thoughts were centered on a vague, mysterious instinct which whispered to her that with her first admission into that frowning cavern the mantle of fierce old Red Jabez would fall upon her, and with it would come power that a Czar might envy! A Czar's power, indeed, but with all of a Czar's cares and more; for Czar never ruled over subjects like these.

A sudden hush fell upon the place; the mutterings ceased as if tongues were stricken stiff. Rufe, with his head now enwrapped in crossed bandages, stared toward the great rock with a wavering expression in his smoldering eyes, an expression that hovered between reluctant submission, reawakened cupidity, and dawning hope. Dolores stood motionless, imperious in every line and feature, her heavy eyelashes veiling the eagerness in her eyes, her red lips curved in royal indifference.

The great rock was turning.

Slowly, yet with the flawless regularity of a millwheel, the mass of stone was rolled upward and to one side; it rested at last on a ledge, balanced perfectly, ready to fall again at the touch of a finger; and in the aperture appeared the human agent of its opening.

Milo, the giant Abyssinian, guardian of the rock, custodian of the Cave of Terrible Things, bone of contention for the jealous and terror of the strongest, filled the entrance with his colossal frame and looked out with a calm dignity that made the whites cringe with hatred. Slowly, with

stately grace, the giant advanced until he stood before Dolores, and in his coal-black eyes shone the light of limitless devotion. He knelt, kissed the sequins on her tunic's hem, then, with both hands pressed to his forehead, he bowed his face to the earth at her feet.

"Rise, Milo," said Dolores, gently, and her breath caught painfully as she spoke. She knew what the slave came for; every man in that community of pirates, wreckers, escaped slaves, and convicts knew as well as she. All had awaited this moment, knowing when it came that the mystery of the cave would be a mystery no longer to at least one of them: all knew that the summons meant the passing of the old pirate who had brought them together, ruled them with blood and iron, and forced from them a homage none of them would render to his Maker.

"My Sultana, it is time," said Milo, rising and waiting. He needed to say no more.

"Lead me to my father, then," replied the girl, and stepped after the giant with sure step and resolute face, giving no heed to the renewed shuffling and congregating of her people, nor to Rufe, who again stood out before the rest and addressed them in fierce tones.

Dolores entered the great hewn-rock doorway and in spite of her stout heart and steel will she thrilled in every fiber. At the end of the frowning passage, whose ruby lamps but accentuated the gloom and imparted to it an infernal glow, lay the great chamber that only the chief might enter. What would she find there? Her father, yes, and dying! Otherwise this summons had never come. The death must be upon him now; the fierce old sea-king had held his throne-room inviolate through many bouts with the grim Reaper, knowing his own strength to conquer. But now he had called, and Dolores sought the unknown with a curiosity that beat down fear.

Behind her a heavy thud echoed along the rocky walls, and the outer light was cut off by the falling of the great stone. In a moment Milo stood beside her and, taking her hand in his, led her along the utterly invisible floor until she stood before a massive door.

Her feet sank into the pile of heavy carpets; her nostrils quivered to the delicate odors of burning spices; at the top of the door a great jeweled lantern cast a rich, yellow light down the panels, and the girl gasped involuntarily at the sight revealed to her. Each panel was formed of scales that overlapped like a serpent's; the scales were roughly hammered gold and silver, richly chased, and studded thickly with gems—without any conjecture she knew them to be precious vessels that should have graced an altar, split, perhaps with a bloody cutlass, and beaten out into irregular plates to gratify some grim humor of the terrible old corsair in the long ago. Neither hinges, handle, lock, nor latch appeared on the surface; apparently the door was solidly embedded in the mighty rock itself. The giant laid a hand on the side of the door-frame, and Dolores waited with impatience for admission. For all her schooled self-control her eyes glinted with astonishment when Milo stood aside and bowed low, saying:

“Enter, my princess!”

Without a sound the massive door had vanished, sliding up and out of sight in the dark recess of the roof, leaving smooth, steel-lined slots at sides and bottom that reflected the polish of scrupulous care. Dolores stifled her surprise, and moved toward the heavy velvet hangings which still barred her way. These, too, were swept aside with no visible effort, and the girl stood on the threshold of the chamber of mystery.

CHAPTER II.

DOLORES RECEIVES HER DIADEM.

IN a great canopied bed, taken from some rich looted Indiaman, Red Jabez lay motionless as an effigy in stone. His tall, powerful body was sharply outlined in coverings of silk and rare lace; the arms and crest of a ducal house were worked into the pillows that supported his massive head. His drawn, haggard face was surrounded and all but covered with a great mane of vivid red hair; his silken shirt, wide open at the neck, revealed a massive chest, whose tide of respiration had all but ceased to

run. Only his eyes, fierce yet, held token of lingering life; it was as if the vital spark was concentrated into one final blaze of tremendous brilliancy.

The fierce eyes moved swiftly at Dolores's entrance, and one might have said a film of tenderness swept for an instant over the hard glint in them. It was gone as swiftly as it came, and the stare settled unwaveringly upon the stupefied girl. For stupefaction had gripped Dolores in that first entry into the great chamber. Her wildest dreams, and they had been at times fantastic, had never showed her anything measurably approaching the scene that smote her eyes now. For the moment death, Red Jabez, her destiny, everything melted into the visionary beyond and left her capable of no volition.

The great bed stood in the center of a vast cavern; sides, roof, floor, every inch of the rock itself bore proof of the handiwork of hundreds of cunning craftsmen; but the furnishings filled Dolores's eyes to the exclusion of all else. Divans and chairs, cabinets and tables carried the mind far away to the realm of emperors and kings; vases from China and Greece stood on stands of boule-work; a tall ebony-and-ivory clock-case, in which ticked sonorously a masterpiece of Peter Hele, stood between two gorgeous pieces of Gobelin tapestry. And around her and above, Dolores's amazed eyes lighted upon gems of the painter's art such as few collections might boast. The entire ceiling was covered with a colossal “Battle of the Amazons,” by Rubens, each figure thrown out in startling distinctness, full of voluptuous life and action; the walls were mantled by vast golden frames holding the best of Titian, Correggio and Giorgione, Raphael and Ribera. And jewels flashed everywhere; cunningly placed lamps, themselves encrusted with the reddest of rubies, the subtlest of green emeralds, flooded walls and furnishings with a soft yet searching light which seemed to be carefully calculated to accentuate those things whose beauty demanded light, yet to leave the eye unwearied.

“The hour has struck, my Sultana,” said Milo anxiously, and Dolores shook off the spell and approached the great bed. Red

Jabez closed his eyes as she leaned over him, and his lips now alone gave evidence of life. The girl, reared among the wildest of desolate isolation, knowing no softening ties of family, her impulses and emotions those of a beautiful animal, and increasingly so because of her station among the rabble that called the dying man chief, stared down at her terrible parent without a trace of visible regret: rather in her eyes shone the triumph of a victor about to enter upon a conquered kingdom. But the red pirate was speaking, and she bent her ear to catch his words. It required no physician's knowledge to perceive in his damp face all the signs of imminent dissolution.

"Dolores, my traverse is run," whispered Jabez. The effort all but stole his breath. He paused; then summoning all the tremendous will that had dominated his frame when surging with strength, he told what he had to say in short sentences, nursing the flickering spark to force his speech. "Never leave here, girl. Let no man go, either. The world has forgotten me and all of us; but memory is tenacious—it will revive at a hint; every throat that pulses with hot life here—yes, my daughter, even your fair throat—was measured years ago—a rope awaits every one. But here—"

"Yes, father?" Dolores shivered in the pause; the silence chilled her. The giant Abyssinian stood at the head of the bed, and now moistened the dying lips with wine. Red Jabez strained convulsively, snatching at his throat, and resumed with weaker voice.

"Here I have been king; here you are queen; all these things you see, and many more, are yours; life and death are in your hands to give or withhold. Keep the steel hand, though you wear the glove, Dolores. You have learned power; with the greater power you take from this chamber, and with Milo, let nothing, no man, stir your fears. Keep this chamber as I have kept it; it is your strength; when danger threatens to beat you down, here you will find—"

The fluttering whisper ceased. The old pirate lay rigid. Dolores, having heard so much, yet so little, hovered over the bed in an ecstasy of unsatisfied hunger for more; Milo stood by, a magnificent statue

in living bronze, his eyes set in a steady blaze on the face of his master. Once more the blue lips moved. Dolores darted down with eager ear, her hands clasped as if in supplication.

"Milo—tell," came the whisper, and with it went up the soul of Red Jabez to face a tribunal more dread than any earthly judge his body had eluded. And the tall clock ticked his knell.

Dolores flung herself down on the bed, patting the dead face with nervous fingers; but she was dry-eyed, no filial despair raised tumult in her breast, her pleading was for the impossible—for the dead lips to speak—and when she was refused her plea, she sprang from the couch in a paroxysm of royal fury:

"Now, by the powers of evil, he shall lie unconfined until those secretive lips read me the riddle they have half told!" she cried, pacing between bed and wall with uplifted arms and hard, glittering eyes. She suddenly paused in her wild walk, turned swiftly, and reached the bedside with the same subtle, gliding sweep that had carried her before Yellow Rufe; it was a characteristic movement with her—a compound of the gliding dart of the tiger-shark and the silent-footed pounce of its jungle brother. Milo roused from his dejection and sprang from his knees with amazing promptitude, but he had yet to round the bed-foot when the splendid fury stood panting over the corpse.

"Speak!" she cried, shaking the coverlet savagely. Milo, with horror in his shining face, gently removed her hand, then stood before her with bowed head, his cavernous chest heaving wildly.

"Fool! Leave me!" she snapped, and struck the slave with all her savage force on the cheek. Milo's face turned gray for a flashing instant, then the doglike devotion that filled his heart shone through his eyes, and he knelt at the furious girl's feet, his head to the ground. In a moment he stood up and, laying a hand reverently upon Dolores's shaking shoulders, he gazed deep into her eyes. She shivered again at the uncanny hint of volcanic might effused by the giant—volcanic, yet quiescent for the moment. His lips opened to speak; and she

sprang to the reaction. Now a fresh fury seized her at the slave's temerity; she flung off his hand, and snatched forth her dagger.

"Strike, Sultana," said Milo simply. He drew aside the strap of his leathern tunic, baring his heart. "Strike, but first suffer thy slave to release thee from this tomb."

"Release? Tomb? What talk is this?" gasped Dolores, her dagger held poised aloft, her lips quivering.

"A tomb it is if thy servant falls, Sultana. None save I can open the great door. Close it? Yes, any might close it. Come, I will lead thee out of this awful presence; then at the gate thou shalt send Milo to his master who loved him."

Slowly Dolores slipped her dagger into the sheath, and her face was bowed in confusion. All her life, the giant slave had tended her, guarded her steps and her sleep, taught her the exercises that had made her feared by all the turbulent crew outside; and she was now permitted the saving grace of remembrance. She gave him her hand, and allowed him to place it upon his head, always his favorite means of expression when she followed an outburst of rage with contrition; and in softer tone she begged for an answer to the riddle that had been left with her.

"Come, Sultana," Milo said, once more laying a hand on her shoulder, this time without resentment from her. "Thy father, the Red Chief, left much to be told; I will tell thee all, but not now. Patience, princess," he pleaded, catching the warning glint in her eyes, "dost thou hear nothing? Listen attentively—no, not in here, outside—bend thy ear to this tapestry; 'tis before a cunning sounding stone through which voices may well be heard on the cliffside. Listen."

Dolores listened with bad grace, for she regarded this as a subterfuge of the giant's, and resentment was very ready to rise in her again. But in a moment her indifference vanished; she grew alert; her body tensed, and her limbs quivered; the glitter of a queen in righteous anger lighted her eyes, and she raised an unnecessary hand to impress silence upon the slave.

"Hast hear this before now?" she demanded in a vibrant whisper.

"Since thou entered, Sultana. It could be nothing but rebellion; yet was I loath to burden my chief with this trouble in his hour of passage. But I know now that it has risen to heights which demand swift action; therefore I have made thee aware of it."

"'Tis that villain Rufe again!" muttered Dolores, still pressing her ear against the tapestry. The murmur of a hundred voices came clearly to her, and above all sounded the high-raised shout of one who harangued the rest. At periods the murmuring became a howl, and the triumphant note in it left scant room for doubt as to the nature of the address. The girl, faced with the responsibility of decided action, no longer able to depend on the wisdom and terrible power of Red Jabez, stepped from the wall with panting heart and parted lips, but with no trace of fear. Uncertainty moved her; uncertainty as to the resources of the great chamber, whose mysteries had scarcely begun to unfold for her ere the curtain was dropped again. Her stout spirit decided for her.

"Come, lead me out, Milo," she ordered, drawing herself royally erect and slipping her dagger around nearer her hand. "We must cool that rabble before the fire spreads further. Take a weapon, open the door, and follow me."

"It is the decision of a fit daughter of my chief," replied Milo, his great frame expanding to the bounding energy that surged through him. Unknown to her, his eyes had never left Dolores while she was making her decision; now joy and ardor suffused and transfigured him. Slave he was, yet it was he who looked the royal part in that instant.

"Wait but a breath," he said, and reached in two gigantic strides a massive oaken chest heavily fastened with wrought iron. Lifting the lid with reverence, he took out a plain gold circlet and returned to Dolores.

"Thy father bade me make this and keep it until thou wast my Sultana, indeed," he said. He raised the heavy, dull-gold band, and placed it upon Dolores's brow with the courtly homage of a born noble. It fitted to perfection—as indeed it should, since the

loving fingers that had fashioned it had crept around the girl's sleeping head many times to that end—and feminine vanity would not permit Dolores to ignore the fit. She stepped over to a long gilt-framed mirror, and her beautiful face grew dark and her violet eyes dusky at the glorious reflection that gazed out at her.

"It is well, Milo; I thank thee," she smiled. "Now to scatter the rats that gnaw at my walls. Lead out quickly."

Milo entered the passage, raising the plated door and letting it fall after them. He disdained to carry a weapon; but Dolores was content, for she had witnessed what those huge hands could do. As they approached the great stone at the entrance, the sounds outside rang through the corridor, and the sharp reverberations that accompanied them at intervals told of an assault on the rock itself with pikes, crowbars, or other smaller rocks. Milo stooped to the sill of the rock, and placed his hands beneath it.

"Stand away," he whispered, and strained his arms. "Let thy servant go out and silence this clamor—"

"Open quickly!" she interrupted him, imperiously. "It is not for the slave to precede the sovereign. Peace, and open."

Her hand was on her dagger, her head was raised proudly; every inch and line of her figure irradiated splendid strength and surety; Milo heaved at the rock, and smiled blissfully. This was indeed how he had dreamed of his Sultana when she should come into her own.

He heaved steadily, and the great rock rose from one side, rolling up and up until it balanced on the ledge; but Milo knew there was some agency at work that hindered the raising of it; never before had it been a task to bring sweat to his brow, and now he dripped from every pore. The rock refused to balance without his hand upon it, and he dared not take his shoulder away to look over the top lest it fall and crush him. He cast an appealing look toward Dolores, who was impatiently waiting for him to stand clear, and she stepped past him to the outside. She was greeted with a roar of derision that echoed far down to the sea.

"Peace, dogs of the devil!" she cried with one hand upraised. A roaring guffaw answered her. Then a burly ruffian, one-eyed and marked by a great cutlass-scar that ran from his chin across his broken nose and ended somewhere among the roots of his hair, stepped forward with a smirk of confidence, and made a mock curtsy.

"Queen o' the pirates, we salute ye!" he said. Then threw away all pretense, and swore a ripping curse to the destination of his soul. "Come, my girl," he shouted, "the game's played to a finish. Th' old buck is dead, an' we want some o' them pretties he hid away inside. You're a nice gal, I don't deny, and we ain't going to harm ye if ye don't hinder us; but we ain't playin' kings an' queens no more. Come now, let the big feller take us in, and say no more about it, for have our fling, we will."

The mob had edged nearer, until now they surged around the entrance so close to Dolores that she felt the breath of the leaders. She noticed with sharp wonderment that Yellow Rufe was not among the foremost; but she was given no time to surmise, for the mob pressed on until she was forced either to risk an advance or give ground. A little shock rippled through her when she turned swiftly to see how Milo fared, and found him gone. The mob saw it, too, and seethed about her with hungry faces.

"Come on, lads!" they howled. "Milo's gone inside to open up the loot for us." A grimy hand snatched at the girl's tunic, and in a flash the entrance was choked with fiercely striving shapes.

With a gasping cry of fury Dolores struck aside the bold hand, and with a panther-spring she was upon him. One slender, brown hand, strong as a steel claw, gripped his throat; the other hand gripped a glittering dagger that swept like the arrow of fate to his heart and dropped him a log at her feet. Just for a breath the crowd paused in awe; then hoarsely growling they packed forward again, and Dolores found herself fighting desperately against men maddened into steel-armed wolves, thirsty for her blood in payment for that split. She more than held her own by sheer skill and sup-

pleness for a space; but assailed from all sides save the back she speedily felt her limbs growing heavy and awkward, and a cutlas sang above her bent head when her foot had failed, leaving her without guard or avoidance.

Then she knew that she had been permitted to win her spurs. For the threatening cutlas was caught in mid air by a huge bare hand, wrenched from its owner's grasp, and returned point first into the assailant's breast. And Milo's deep voice rang in her ear:

"Step into the passage, Sultana, and swiftly. Have a care for the body on the floor, but tarry not. To pause is to die!"

She felt herself drawn inside, the battle seemed to leave her isolated, the passage was as still as a cloister after the turmoil outside, and she stumbled along in the dim red glow, barely avoiding tripping over a body on the floor which a glance showed her to be a corpse. This was the man who had tried to crush back the rock door on Milo.

Dolores spurned the body with her foot, and abruptly turned back, in a rage to think that she had permitted the giant slave to order her into skulking security. She halted as swiftly as she had turned; for in the aperture at the end of the passage the huge form of Milo stood, both hands raised, and in them a cask was poised. A queer, spluttering sound at first puzzled Dolores; then she made out a short, hanging fuse depending from the cask, and it spluttered as it dwindled, flinging sparks around the giant's bowed head until the point of fire seemed ready to disappear in the bung-hole.

"Treasure for dogs!" roared Milo. "Divide it among thee!" The great rock thudded down as the cask hurtled out into the mob; the next instant the cavern shook and quivered to a terrific explosion; a moment after the earth might have been dead for all sound in the passage; yet another moment and the outer world rang with cries and shrieks, curses and entreaties, and Milo bowed low to his mistress and said:

"Now if my Sultana deems fit, it is time to show this scum of the earth their sovereign."

"Wait, Milo," replied Dolores, shudder-

ing slightly at sight of him. The giant was streaked and splashed with blood; for in those moments when he stood defenseless before casting his infernal machine, a dozen cutlasses and knives had sought his life.

"Pardon thy slave," he returned, sensing her meaning. "I will go thus. 'Twere not good that these dogs should know their wounds can hurt. Such scratches are nothing. They are paid for in full."

"It is well. Lead out again, good Milo, and fear not for me. With thou beside me I am armed in proof."

Again they emerged into the air, but now a deathly silence received them. Silence broken only by the rustling of garments, as a withered old crone shambled forward and cast herself at Dolores's feet.

CHAPTER III.

THE GROVE OF MYSTERY.

DOLORES stood still, sweeping the scene of destruction with a gaze of flinty penetration. The groveling crone at her feet affected her like something unclean, and she spurned the old woman with her foot, stepping aside with a gesture of disgust. Then she raised her right hand, and cried with bitter scorn:

"Come, my brave jackals! Come to the feast prepared for thee." She lowered her hand and with a contemptuous smile indicated the gruesome results of the explosion of Milo's awful bomb.

On the edge of the forest the hardier rascals had halted; at her word they glared loweringly at her and the impassive giant at her back; from the shadow of the trees yellow and brown and black faces peered in quivering terror; but none responded to her command to approach her. The old woman on the ground alone made audible reply, and her slavish whining enraged Dolores. With a stamp of her sandaled foot she tore from her waist the gold cord, slipped off the dagger sheath, and fell upon the wretched old servitor with a shower of blows.

"Silence, old cat!" she cried, and the blows fell heavily. "Up with thee, and away. Go quickly, and make ready the

altar in the Grove of Mystery. Cease thy bleating, old witch, and summon thy shaky wits against the ordeal I shall put thee to. Some one among ye stirred up the rising which resulted as ye now see. That one I shall know before sundown, and he shall bitterly repent him. Away!"

Dolores was astonished at seeing no sign of Rufe, but outwardly she showed none of her astonishment. A more vital consideration was present in the disobedience of the motley crew who as yet made no effort to come to her call. Drawing herself fully erect when the old woman departed, she again stretched out her hand and cried:

"Dogs of Satan! I await your homage. Red Jabez lies dead: yet his spirit lives in me, your queen. By so many breaths that ye flout me, by just so many torments shall I have ye torn. Come, dogs. Kneel!"

A hoarse murmur went up from the forest edge, and first one by one, then in knots of half a score each, the negroes and half-breeds slunk into the open and approached her with eyes full of panic. The whites, not so susceptible to abstract influence, still hesitated, drawing near to each other in growling consultation. Dolores gave them no sign, though she watched them keenly from under her lowered lashes. She gave her attention to the line of abject creatures who filed slowly past her, each one stopping to grovel in the dust at her feet and passing on. These Milo halted near by and herded into a shivering, frightened mob. And Dolores's cool disregard of the whites had its calculated effect. One by one they stepped out into the open as had the colored men; the more timorous, or superstitious, came first, some wearing shamed grins, others palpably impressed by the example of the others and shuffling on their way uncomfortably. Last of all came the bolder spirits, and these wore faces intended to express contempt, or at least sarcastic indifference; but the faces changed invariably on closer approach to the queen. Memory proved a stubborn master; in every man's breast remembrance clamored to them to have a care how they bore themselves before this beautiful fury they called queen.

Still Yellow Rufe came not.

When all had knelt, and all had been herded by the giant Milo in two separate parties, the number was tallied, and of the whites, besides Rufe, seven were missing. One lay inside the passage; of the rest there were remains lying about the rocky wall to the cavern that might be three men or six—human discernment could never decide which.

Dolores faced her mongrel subjects again and her dark eyes blazed with fire, her beautiful face was dark with surging blood, every line of her lithe figure quivered as she spoke:

"I seek the dog who stirred ye up to mutiny!" she cried. "Yellow Rufe, if it be he, is not among ye, nor is he one of these carrion scattered on the ground. If it be some other villain, him I will know before the sun has stretched my shadow to the cliff. Deliver him up to me, and he alone shall repay. Disobey, and every biting dog among ye shall swiftly learn the price of disobedience. I wait."

The sun was fast setting, and already the shadows had grown long. Five minutes at most would see the shadow of Dolores's head at the base of the great rock, and the blacks started whimpering with apprehension. Among the whites a tremendous quiet reigned; but sullen brows here, snarling teeth there, gave hint of their interest in the sun's progress. Still no man spoke. Rather they looked at each other questioningly as the minutes flew, as if the culprit were indeed not among them.

But Dolores was wise beyond her years, wise with a wisdom bred of her volcanic existence in such a station, and she refused to be hoodwinked by the apparent absence of the man she sought. Her shadow touched the rock, and without another second of hesitation she turned toward the forest fringe, walking with majestic carriage and looking neither to right nor left. She simply uttered one short sentence: "To the Grove!"

Every man with dark blood in his veins followed her like a sheep, for terrible things had been witnessed in the Grove of Mysteries: things far beyond the understanding of such men. The sullen whites hung back

again, for their colder blood was not impregnated with the fears and superstitions that exerted such tremendous sway over their colored fellows. Still Dolores gave them never a look; she walked on, and the forest closed behind her, as if she believed her footsteps followed by every foot in the unruly crew.

It was Milo who constituted her dependable rearguard. Milo was there, and Milo would see to it that no skulker declined his queen's command. There lay the reason why Dolores so placidly turned her back to men whose dearest ambition would have been realized by the plunge of steel between her shoulders at that moment. Milo walked around to the rear of the hesitant mob, and without a word gripped the hindmost in his two great hands and hurled him bodily over the heads of his mates in the desired direction.

"Swine!" swore a harelipped Mexican, whipping out his cutlas. "I'll see your black heart for that!" and furiously made play to avenge insult to his sorely handled fellow.

The black giant turned as calmly as if his mistress had called him, and seized the fellow's cutlas hand in one huge fist, crushing bone and steel into gory pulp without visible effort. His lips never opened, his tremendous chest was ruffled not one whit; Milo's eyes alone gave warning of what he might do if occasion arose; and fooled by his obvious carelessness, the white men closed around him, knives and cutlasses drawn, frantic for his life.

They should have known better. Their lessons had been many and vivid; but not a man of them all was of the caliber to learn from a slave. Milo kept hold of his man's hand, and at the scrape of steel leaving scabbard, he brought up his free hand and grasped the fellow's left wrist. Then, springing aside with the resistless impulse of a charging buffalo, he gained a clear space, and began to swing his victim by the wrists.

One complete circle was made with the human club, then a catlike ruffian watched his chance and darted in with murderous knife at Milo's breast while the dreadful club was at his back. Cool as a mountain

spring, the giant immediately let go his man, letting him fly far behind him like a stone from a catapult. In a twinkling of an eye, the great hands that released the one captive closed afresh on the new assailant in front, and now the giant gave no further grace. His fingers tightened on the man's throat and the desperate face went black. Then, keeping the fellow ever before him, he suddenly flung him into the air by the waist, shifting holds with tigerish swiftness, and caught him by the ankles as he came down. He whirled the unfortunate wretch once, and three men went down under the terrible blow; the rest scattered with furious howls, bespattered with the blood of their comrade; but one more sight of the unruffled giant cowed them; none attempted further knife or sword-play. Then Milo smiled scornfully, and uttered: "Go!" and they went to the forest like jackals before the lion. The giant saw them on their way, and tossing his fearful weapon over the cliff, strode after them, an awful embodiment of relentless, all but limitless strength.

The forest lay hushed and dim beyond the fringe; whispering leaves and crackling twigs sounded sharp as a shower of stones in the stillness. Great trees reared their majestic heads to mingle their foliage and shut out the light; every creeping, flying, walking creature seemed awed into a vague murmuring that was deeper than silence. The Grove of Mysteries was a semicircular space of cool, mossy sward, bowered in great trees and tangled vine screens; its background was the bare rock of the cliff-side itself—actually, though unknown to the rabble, the outer rocky wall of the great chamber—and against this stood the altar.

The old woman had made use of her skinny limbs to good effect, impelled by a fear that had become terror. The altar was resplendent in silk and velvet, fashioned for an altar very different from this; but in place of the vessels usually associated with so sacred a piece of furniture, the Altar of the Grove was embellished with a mosaic of skulls and bones surrounding a complete skeleton which held its head in one grisly hand.

In the hollow eye-sockets glowed a weird fire that darted forth at irregular intervals like glances of demoniacal hate; at the altar foot a great censer erupted a dense cloud of pungent smoke that rendered the altar and those about it still more vague and ghostly. And the glade was full of cowering, slaving blacks and half-breeds, whose superstitious terrors reached high tide with each succeeding swirl of smoke or outflash of eye-socket fires.

Dolores went directly to the old woman, who stood in cringing subservience with a plain white garment in her hands. This she placed on the girl's shoulders, fastening it at the bosom with a small skull of jade stone whose grinning teeth were pearls, and whose eye-sockets were empty with an awful blackness. The gold circlet was discarded, and in its place Dolores placed on her head a turban formed from a stuffed coiled snake, whose neck and head darted hither and thither on cunning springs with her every motion and gesture.

To this awesome place came the herd that Milo drove before him; and not a man among the hardened crew was hardy enough to carry his bravado into the Grove. Blacks and whites alike, no matter what their inmost thoughts might be, yielded to the spell of the place the moment their feet trod the sward and the congregation settled into the places allotted to them.

Dolores glided out in front of the altar, and eyes glittered, dusky throats went constricted and dry with terror when she stirred up the brazier and was hidden for a moment in the rising volume of blue smoke in which flashes of devilish light played incessantly. Milo stepped up behind and above the altar, and as the smoke reeked about him vanished seemingly into the face of the cliff. There, in an unsuspected outlet to the great chamber, was the key to much of the magic with which Dolores kept her turbulent crew on the borderline of fear. She flashed a glance holding much of anxiety after her giant servitor, and busied herself about the altar to gain time.

She had received from his hands as he stepped up the effigy of a man in black wax, and now she advanced with hand upraised for silence. It was unnecessary: the si-

lence of the dead prevailed in the Grove. With the image held aloft Dolores was a magnet that drew all eyes inevitably. Six inches tall, the image was a cleverly modeled composite of every type in the motley band; and every man realized this. Placing the effigy on the altar, Dolores seized from the brazier a glowing coal with her bare hands and placed it behind the figure. Then she flung both hands high and her vibrant voice pealed through the Grove.

"Regard all men the voice of the gods! By this sacred fire shall this image be melted; and when it is gone, out of its many likenesses shall remain the shape of him who stirred ye to mutiny against me. That shape I shall show ye by the power of my will. Lest ye disbelieve that I have this power, behold! Look for proof in the smoke behind me!"

As she spoke she stirred the incense to a dense cloud of smoke, and her blazing eyes, turned from her people, peered through the reek for a reassuring sign from the rock, for what she now demanded of Milo called for superhuman swiftness and surety. As the seconds sped, she kept the smoke swirling thickly, and her voice rang out in a weird incantation that kept the spectators trembling with the growing suspense.

Then a triumphant note entered her speech; the smoke rose thicker for an instant, then dissolved; and as it vanished, high on the rocky cliff, framed, as it seemed, in the solid rock itself, stood the grim, cold figure of the dead Red Jabez.

In this, her grave extremity, Milo the strong, Milo the slave, more than all, Milo the faithful, had not failed her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PIRATES' BARBECUE.

A MOMENT of ghastly hush prevailed, then the Grove shook from sward to tree-tops—pandemonium broke loose and all were in turmoil.

No need now to wait for the verdict of the wax image; no further shifting of brazen glances, or winking of knowing eyes. Shrill voices of terrified blacks, hoarse bel-

lowings of the hardiest rascals who had ever kissed a dripping cutlas, the throaty roar of men who had played willing lieutenants to the ringleader: all pealed up to high heaven for the culprit to come forth and taste of the queen's justice rather than wait for her vengeance.

"Rufe! Yellow Rufe!" they howled. They howled it until the forest echoed with the word.

"Peace, Devilspawn!" cried Dolores, covering the crowd with an all-embracing smile of utter scorn. "Think ye I need to hear the name? Go, all of ye! Fill your swinish skins with liquor, and trouble me no more this day. When I will that Yellow Rufe appear, here he shall be drawn, whether he will or not. And in your carousal let this thought be with ye: Ye are dogs and slaves of dogs; by my will ye live, at my word ye die. The Red Chief is dead; I am your law, your queen, owner of your bodies and souls! Let any of ye seek to state Yellow Rufe, and Milo shall pick your limbs apart as if ye were flies. Go now; there is rum broached, and wine; make a barbecue, and fill yourselves to bursting like the vultures ye are!"

"Hello, lads, that's your sort!" roared a purple-faced ruffian with a hang-lip. "A right proper gal is that. Give her a huzza and crack yer pipes, lads!"

"Bravo, Hanglip!" bellowed another of the same kidney. Spotted Dog had lost part of an ear, and the same knife had seamed his flabby jowl into the likeness of a bloodhound's cheek; his deeply-pitted visage completed the ensemble, and no other name would have fitted him as well. "Bravo, old cutthroat! Let her play queens an' fairies, if she wants to. Here's for th' jolly grog, lads. Hey, Stumpy, start a cheer for th' pretty wench!"

So had the spell of the Grove left them immediately they smelled the fleshpots. But Dolores still held the altar; and Stumpy, having a keener memory perhaps than most of his fellows, took the warning that flashed from her angry eyes. He shivered slightly as his gaze met hers, then, hopping forward on his one good leg and club-foot, he swung a knotty fist against Spotted Dog's creased jowl and growled:

"A turn wi' that poison tongue, Spotted Dog. All hands, too, hear me talkin'. Here's a royal feast spread for us, an' th' spreader's queen o' th' pirates! Don't ever ferget that, lads. I ain't hankerin' fer what Rufe 'll get. Away wi' you, now, an' I'll slit th' winepipe o' th' dog as says disrespect to th' queen."

And so the rascals trooped down to their hut-village. Noisily, profanely, full of horseplay and ear-burning jests; but never a voice spoke any word that failed in its homage when Dolores was the theme.

Snugly settled around the great rock door, the pirates' village looked out from a broad level platform over the darkening evening sea. In the center, its rear abutting on the rock itself, stood the great council hall and the dwelling of Dolores. In front of this black slaves busily heaped a great bonfire; torches were thrust into iron rings on door-post and tree-trunk; noisy ruffians tramped into a cool cave in the rock and trundled forth casks and horn cups; while Sancho, the Spaniard, bent over a whetstone, giving his knife a final edge against the arrival of the meat.

A venomous devil was this Sancho, and his contorted face, with the missing eye covered by a black patch, worked demoniacally in the gathering darkness with each leaping flame of the ignited torches. The hand that clutched the knife was a thing of horror; two fingers and half the thumb remained from some drunken brawl to serve the Spaniard in future play for work or debauch; and the man, crouching low over his stone, made a picture of incarnate hate that had no humor in it.

"Where's th' flesh?" screamed Sancho, looking up, his mutilated thumb running creepily along the knife-edge.

"Whet your tusks, lads, here's the blessed manna!" squealed Caliban, a hunch-backed terror, who kept his maimed carcass secure by virtue of his viperish temper, coupled with an uncanny skill of the cutlas. "Milo's our man! Huzza for Milo!"

Out from the trees stalked the giant Abyssinian, and the shadows and torchlight distorted him to grotesque proportions. He walked as if his weight was nothing; yet on his great shoulders he bore a half-grown

ox, its feet hobbled, its tongue hanging from its panting mouth. Straight to the fire he stepped and cast his burden down, turning again without a word and going back to the rock portals.

"Meat for men!" screamed Sancho, crouching again, knife in hand.

"For men!" echoed Caliban ferociously, and whipped his cutlas out. "Stand clear!" he howled, and Sancho dodged aside. The little terror's blade sang through the air with a wicked whistle; it curved high over Sancho, then flashed down and plunged through the throat of the ox, pinning the beast to the earth. And when he recovered his breath the Spaniard swooped upon the prize, and his knife completed what the dwarf had well begun.

Then began an orgy that must render description bald and colorless. Casks were broached by knocking out the heads; long horns of cattle were filled to slopping over with rare wine or powerful rum; and then up leaped Hanglip on to an unbroached cask, cup in hand, and bellowed a toast that set the trees, the sea, the skies clamoring with rasping applause.

"The next vessel as heaves in sight, lads! May her sails be silk, her masts be gold, and her great cabin full o' rum, with a pretty wench sittin' atop o' every keg!"

From the fire came the odor of roasting meat, and the black night came down outside, making of the small circle where the pirates sprawled a blotch of infernal light, peopled with infernal shapes. But a sprinkling of faces a shade less evil leavened the mass; for to the feast came trooping the women of the camp: of a kidney with the men—yet women, with women's beguilements and softnesses.

Dolores sat alone in the great chamber, careless of the noise outside, her beautiful face dark with somber passion. Beside her chair Milo had placed her treasure chests; hers now, through the death of the terrible old corsair who had amassed them. Idly she had heaped the table with a glittering collection of gems that an empress might well have found interest in; but Dolores frowned as at so much dross, for her thoughts were far away. The filmiest of lace and silken shawls, jeweled slippers,

gossamer-gold head dresses, pearls and rubies from India and Persia—all lay in confusion at her hand, and aroused no spark of joy in her breast. From time to time her brooding eyes flashed and fastened upon a priceless Rembrandt "Laughing Cavalier" on the wall opposite; they flashed again when her gaze shifted to a colossal Rubens "Rape of the Sabines"; her face lighted for an instant when her fingers in groping closed upon a cobwebby golden net, scintillating with cunningly wrought jeweled insects caught in the meshes, which had once graced the all-powerful head of Pompadour.

"Where such things are, are better!" she whispered vehemently, clenching her strong, slender hands fiercely. "Where such are fashioned and worn there are people worthy my power. My people! Pah!" she burst out passionately. "My people? Dogs! Cattle! Brutes without souls! There—" she flung a hand impetuously toward the "Laughing Cavalier"—"there is the pirate who should call me queen! There"—with a gesture toward Rubens's great canvas—"are men that I would command. Here, I must stay, why? Because a dead man willed it so. May I wither eternally if I make not my own laws. Milo!"

She clapped her hands, and in a moment the giant was before her, reverent awe in every line of his huge body.

"Sultana?"

"Are my beasts well fed?"

"They eat like crocodiles, guzzle like swine, Sultana."

"See that the liquor flows freely, Milo. And a word in thy ear. We shall go from here as quickly as the fates will send a ship. Let no sail pass henceforth."

"Lady, that may not be—"

"Silence! Give me no may not! When I, Dolores, will to go, who shall stay me?"

"Death lies beyond the horizon for thee as for all of us, Sultana. Pirate the Red Chief was last of the band; every man who calls thee queen is under sentence of death; the pillage of a hundred ships lies here. Here is safety. The Red Chief's law—"

"Peace! I am the law! Seek me that ship—and quickly. Shall I live among such carrion, when the world is peopled with

such as those?" she cried with a sweeping gesture toward a life-size "Three Graces," by Correggio, epitomizing feminine grace indeed.

"Thou art fairer, Sultana," replied the giant simply; and the girl flushed warmly for all her moody dissatisfaction. She smiled kindly upon the slave, and said more softly: "Thy devotion pleases me, Milo. Yet is my will unchanged. Seek me that ship. I will go from here. Stay, if thou wilt, or art afraid."

"Lady," returned the giant, "when the Red Chief, thy father, took me from the slave ship he gave me liberty—liberty to serve him. He has gone; my care is now the queen, his daughter. Going or staying, Milo remains thy bodyguard. Pardon if I offended thee; thy father desired what I have told thee. But the ship. This evening, at sundown, a sail leaped in sight beyond the Tongue."

"This evening! And ye said no word of it?" cried Dolores, blazing with fresh anger. She leaned forward in her chair as if crouching for a spring.

"It passed as swiftly as it appeared, Sultana. No other eye save mine saw it; the men know nothing—"

"It is well, Milo. I had forgotten thy eyes were twice as keen as any other man's. Keep that condor's vision of thine bent to seaward, and tell no man of what comes into view. Bring me the news; I shall know how to keep my rascals in hand. Now go and send to me a woman to serve me: a young woman, nimble and deft; give the old woman to the cooks for scullery drudge."

"A woman here, Sultana?"

"Here! What bee buzzes in thy great head now?" The giant again looked grave; the girl's impatience surged anew.

"Sultana, don't forget that, save thee and me, servant of the great chamber, none may enter here and go alive?"

"Now by the fiend, enough!" blazed the girl. "Again, I am the law! Wilt have it imprinted on thy great body with my whip?"

Milo made a low obeisance, departed without further speech, and in a few moments ushered in from the bacchanalian revels a maid for his mistress.

"Pascherette will serve thee well, Sultana," he said, leading the girl forward. He saw approval in Dolores's face and departed, his luminous black eyes unwontedly soft and limpid.

CHAPTER V.

MILO SIGHTS A SAIL.

DAY broke through a silver haze, and as the blue sea unrolled to view, far down to the southeast, flashed a pearly sliver of sail lazily drawing in to the coast. It was the merest streak of white against the sky, and none but Milo's sharp eyes could have seen it. Even at that distance, and indistinct though it was in the mist, the giant detected the three masts crossed with yards that proclaimed the vessel a full-rigged ship. He gazed long and earnestly, to assure himself of the ship's progress, then hurried along the mountain toward the village.

He strode with the free stride of a perfect creature, swinging from the hip and covering the ground at a common man's running pace. His vast chest heaved and fell easily and rhythmically, the golden-hued skin rippling and flashing in the rising sunlight; every line of limbs and torso was the outward and visible sign of abounding health; the straight black hair falling to his shoulders framed a keen, powerful face of Semitic mold, in which the high brow and calm, fearless eyes belonged rather to one of the blood-royal than to a slave. And rightly, too, for Milo, the giant, was of princely line in his own land, and his present servitude was an accident that had yet failed to rob him of his birthright of dignity.

He came abreast of and above the haven where lay the stout sloop and boats of the community, and the sounds of noisy industry about the craft brought a frown and a sneer to his face. It reminded him too vividly of his actual station, and violently dragged him back from the realm of visions he had allowed himself to indulge in. The pirates were busily overhauling their gear, filling water casks, calking dried-out seams, and sluicing opening decks with copious

streams of water, just as they were used to do in the palmy days when Red Jabez kept them gorged with pillage.

Milo hurried faster, for he feared they too had sighted his ship, and sprang down to the shore to accost surly Caliban.

"Here, Milo old buck, stick yer beak into this, lad!" screamed Caliban, thrusting forward a brimming horn of wine. The giant declined impatiently, waving a hand toward the activity afoot.

"What, won't drink luck, hey?" cried the dwarf, emptying the horn himself. "Ain't got the news yet, hey?"

"News? What news can such as thee have that I am not told?" demanded Milo contemptuously. Caliban scowled viciously at his tone, but the giant's hands were strong, and the little ruffian loved his warped life. He flung down his horn and retorted: "We're to windward o' ye this time, Milo me lad. Th' queen bade us be ready for a lamb headed this way, an', sure enough, there comes a craft now, a'most in sight from here. Small fish, true, but sweet after so long a spell o' famine."

Milo knew that the ship he had seen could not possibly have been detected from the village. It must be yet another craft, and, without a word, he bounded back up the cliff and scanned the waters closer inshore. There, sure enough, lay a beautiful white schooner, her paint dazzling to the eye, her decks flashing with metal, her canvas faultless in fit and set and whiteness. She was still five miles distant and slowly edging along the coast, as if indifferent to her tardy progress. The giant noted her exact position, then presented himself to Dolores.

The girl was luxuriously submitting to the skilful attentions of Pascherette; her wealth of lustrous hair enveloped her like a veil, rendering almost superfluous the filmy silken robe she had donned. But at sight of Milo all her feline contentment fled, and she thrust the maid from her and stood up to receive his report.

"A ship?" she flashed.

"Two, Sultana. The men make ready now."

"The men? Dolt! Did I not tell thee to keep such news for me?"

"They saw the small vessel while I was beyond the Tongue. They have not seen the ship I saw, nor have I told them. It is a great ship, lady; theirs is but a small, poor thing."

"I will see it." Dolores suddenly remembered the maid, whose presence she had ignored. Pascherette stood apart, a small, fairylike French octoroon, dainty as a golden thistledown; her full red lips were parted in eager inquisitiveness, and her slim, small body leaned forward, as if to catch every word; but at sight of her Dolores burst into knowing merriment, for the girl's eyes told her story. They were fastened in intense, burning adoration, not on the mistress but on Milo, the giant slave.

"La-la, chit!" Dolores cried; "keep thy black eyes from my property." But more weighty matters than a maid's fluttering bosom demanded her attention, and she commanded sharply: "Milo, summon the men to the council hall at once. Let none be absent. Go swiftly!" Milo went, and Dolores flashed around on Pascherette again: "And thou, hussy, take this clinging frippery from me and give me my tunic. And, mark me, girl, thy eyes and ears belong to me. Thy tongue, too. Let that tongue utter one word of what those eyes see, those ears hear, and it shall be plucked from thy pretty mouth with hot pincers. Remember!"

Dolores put on her tunic and swept out to steal a long look at the white schooner before entering the hall.

Into the council hall the pirates came trooping, tarry, wet, soiled with the estuary mud as they were, and stood in a milling mob awaiting speech from Dolores, who entered from the rear and scanned their faces closely. Shuffling feet and whistling breath would not be stilled, even in her presence, for their appetites were already whetted for a victim, and the fumes of the previous night's debauch lingered. They glared at the girl and cursed impatiently.

"Hear!" commanded Dolores with an imperious gesture, and every sound was muffled, not stilled. "Hear, my brave jackals! For long ye have hungered for employment fit for the royal corsairs ye are. Now the meal is to hand." The hall

reverberated with the clamor that went up. Cutlasses scraped from their scabbards and swished aloft; bold Spotted Dog snatched out his great horse-pistol and blazed into the floor, filling the place with acrid smoke and noise. Dolores's eyes flashed angrily; she governed her fury, and went on when the uproar subsided: "Your boats are ready?"

"Ready and rotting wi' idleness!" roared Hanglip.

"And ye purpose wasting powder and shot on some paltry craft of the islands! Wait, my brave lads, I have better game at hand!"

Now the crowd was hushed in earnest, for none of them saw more than a frolic coming from such a small craft as the schooner. The girl went on to tell them of the big ship that Milo had seen, and she painted it a rich West Indiaman, loaded to the hatches with rum and powder, gold and jewels, delicate meats and—with emphasis which she carefully cloaked yet made vivid—dainty ladies, no doubt.

"Take ye the sloop, then," she commanded, "and bring me no tale of failure. Ten miles southwest from the bluff she lies becalmed. Let no man return without tribute for me. Go now!"

With a whoop the evil ruffians tumbled out, hurling themselves pell-mell down to the shore, and splashing out to the boats. Their sloop, a long, beamy Cayman-built craft, of eighty tons and twelve murderous guns that were cast for a king's ship, could be handled by four men or a hundred. She carried fifty men now, and she sped out of the estuary before the faint breeze with a velocity that spelled certain doom for any square-rigged ship she ever lifted over the horizon.

Dolores watched them go with inscrutable face; then commanded Milo to attend her in the great chamber. Pascherette, not yet over her fright, hovered tremblingly near, and her mistress dismissed her with a pacifying pat on the head, flinging, at the same time, a string of pearls around her neck that brought mingled gratitude, greed, and conceit into her sparkling eyes.

"How stands the schooner now?" Dolores asked when the girl had gone.

"She drifts slowly, Sultana. There is little wind. Yet she ever comes nearer."

"Milo, that is my ship!" breathed Dolores fervidly. "I have jewels and silken trash, the richest in my store, which my father told me were taken from such a vessel. A yacht, he called that craft. 'Tis sailed for pleasure; trade never soils the holds of such craft; men who sail such a vessel as that which now hovers near us are of the kind from which comes such as that!" Once more she indicated the "Laughing Cavalier," and now her form and face were filled with surging ambition strengthened with ardent hope.

"How goes our sloop?" she asked abruptly.

"Swiftly, but with the dying breath of the wind. By noon she will be swinging idly, Sultana."

"Who of the boldest rascals remain with us?"

"The noisiest dogs have gone. Sancho remains, for Stumpy cracked his head last night in a brawl. The others here are but cattle!" The giant uttered the words with bitter scorn.

"Then, at noon, Milo, we move to secure my ship!" Dolores cried with gleaming eyes. "Set slaves to move out the false Point and anchor it a cable-length off the true. I will have a plan then to lure the schooner on. We must not let her escape, Milo!"

"Pardon, lady, I know a way!"

"And that?"

"I will swim to the schooner and command them to thy presence."

Dolores smiled whimsically, for she was too wise to be ignorant of the fact that such men as were in that schooner must first be caught before they might be commanded. Yet the giant's plan suggested another to her.

"Hear my plan," she said. "That chit—Pascherette—she's a dainty minx! Does she swim?"

"Like a conger, Sultana!" Milo's face lighted warmly, and Dolores shrewdly guessed then that the petite octroon's regard for the giant was not altogether unrequited.

"Then carry her abreast of the vessel,

quickly, and bid her swim out to it. Let her use some of the cunning that is in her pretty little head, and make them wonder what else our island has to offer in dainties. Then, ere evening, I shall have work for thee that shall complete what Pascherette begins. Command the minx to bring forth all her fascinations and allurements. Nay, friend, have no fear for thy sweetheart. I warrant thee she can care for herself, if she will. Go! It is my command!"

Milo departed, and Dolores went out to the Grove, climbed nimbly to the cliff-top, and sat down to watch. She had a clear view of the schooner now winging lazily along three miles away and a mile off shore; the shore, from the point where her rascals were even now towing out a great mass of interlaced trees and foliage planted upon stout logs to form a false point, right along to abreast of the schooner, lay immediately beneath her eye; the blue sea glittered and flashed under the hot sun, unruffled by wind, and only bursting into a long line of creamy foam, where it licked the golden sands. The tall palms nodded languorously, their deep green heads faintly chafing like sleeping crickets; the tinkle of the sands came up to her ears like tiny bells.

Dolores followed with her eyes two swiftly moving figures on the shore path, hidden from the ocean by a mass of verdure, and she smiled cryptically. The giant Milo strode on his way like the embodiment of force; at his side tripped Pascherette, her glossy black crown barely reaching above his waist, her tiny hand hidden completely in his great fist. And she kept her bright eyes raised to his great height all the while, satisfied that her little feet should trip, perhaps, if only her eyes tripped not from his face.

Presently they stopped, and Dolores stood up alertly. There was but a moment's delay, while Pascherette bound her hair more securely; then, with a flirting hand-wave, the little octoroon darted from Milo, wriggled through the bushes, and ran lightly down to the sea. In another moment her small, black head was moving rapidly toward the schooner, her golden skin flashing warmly in the sun as her arms

swept over and over in an adept stroke that carried her forward with the speed of a fish.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PARTY FROM THE YACHT.

THE schooner yacht *Feu Follette* swam sluggishly along shore, her lofty canvas flapping in the faint air. On her spotless quarter-deck, Rupert Venner, wealthy idler and owner of the vessel, lounged in a deck-chair a picture of the utter finality of boredom. His guests, Craik Tomlin and John Pearse, made perfunctory pretense of admiring the lovely coast scenery along the port hand; but their air was that of men surfeited with sights, tired of the languorous calm, *blasé* of life.

The schooner's appointments typified money in abundance. From fore-castle capstan to binnacle she glowed and glittered with massive brass and ornate gilding; along the waist six burnished-bronze cannon stood on heavily carved carriages, lashings and breechings as white as a shark's tooth; over the quarter-deck double awnings gave ample clearance to the swing of the main boom—the outer of dazzling white canvas, the inner of richest, striped silk-and-cotton mixture. The open doors of the deckhouse companion revealed an interior of ivory paneling touched with gold, and hung with heavy velvet punkahs. The walls were embellished with exactly the right number of art gems to establish the artistic perception of the owner and to whet the expectation for more yet unseen. But, with all this, the *Feu Follette* housed a discontented master and discontented guests.

"Oh, for a breeze!" grumbled Pearse, breaking in on the frowning silence. "How much longer are we to drift around these stagnant seas, Venner?"

"The very next slant of wind shall wing us homeward," replied Venner dreamily. "I, too, am sick of the cruise and its deadly monotony."

Again silence, marred only by creak of gear and flap of idle sails. The schooner barely moved now, though the western sky held promise of a breeze later on. Then came a cry from one of the negro crew

forward, and its tenor stirred the party into mild interest.

"De debbil, ef 'tain't one o' dem marmaids! Oh, Cæsar!"

A ripple of panting laughter alongside brought Venner and his guests to the rail in haste, and gone to the windless heavens was their *ennui*. A gleaming, gold-tinted creature, a miniature model of Aphrodite surely, arose from the blue sea and climbed nimbly into the main channels and thence to the deck, where little pools of water dripped from the radiant figure. She shook her small head saucily, and heavy masses of raven-wing hair tumbled about her, provokingly cloaking the charms so boldly outlined by her single saturated tunic of fine silk.

"Who in paradise may you be?" ejaculated Venner, while his friends stared with unconscious rudeness.

"I? I am Pascherette!" laughed the small vision, and her black eyes sparkled impudently.

"Pascherette!" echoed Tomlin, bewildered. "Does Jamaica hold such beauties?" He awkwardly brought forward a deck-chair, while Pearse stood by in speechless amazement. Venner, as better became the host, ordered a steward to bring a wrap for the astounding visitor, but the girl laughed provokingly and declined both.

"It is not for such as I, fine gentlemen," she said, and her sharp eyes were roving busily about the schooner, appraising values like a veritable pirate. "Keep thy courtesies for better than I."

"Better than you, girl?" Venner's tone was incredulous. He was taking mental stock of the priceless pearls about Pascherette's dainty throat. "To be found here?"

"If not here, where shall ye find such a one as my mistress?" Pascherette retorted saucily.

"Your mistress?"

"Without doubt. I am but a slave, my lady is the queen, Dolores."

"A queen—a white woman?" stammered Venner.

"Oh, Venner, let us look into this!" exclaimed Pearse with unconcealed curiosity.

"Just what we have prayed for!" Tomlin

supplemented eagerly. "Anchor, Venner, like a good fellow. A jaunt ashore will brace us all up."

"Nonsense!" objected the owner, albeit with a good trace of inquisitiveness himself. "The breeze will come by evening; and who knows what this coast harbors? A bad name sticks to this shore."

Pascherette had wandered forward, and between sly glances aft and keen scrutiny shoreward, she flung seductive smiles broadcast at the grinning crew, prattling prettily to officer and man alike, as if she were indeed a stranger to the ways of shipboard. While she made her rounds the party aft entered into a warm dispute; their curiosity was whetted, but not sufficiently in Venner's case, to whom the safety of the yacht was paramount just then. They wrangled for half an hour, and the schooner drifted on until she was within a mile or so of the outflung false Point. Then they were again startled out of their self-possession—this time by a cry from the girl who leaned over the bulwarks a picture of ardent admiration for something in the water.

Double awnings and snowy hammock-cloths restricted the view shoreward from the quarter-deck chairs, and surprise as deep as that which greeted the girl surged through the disputing three at a great splashing over the side, accompanied by the boom of a voice that must come from a powerful, free-breathing chest.

"Room for Milo, servant of Dolores!" the hail rang out, and by the same means as Pascherette had used, up climbed Milo, to stand motionless before the white men, an astounding and awe-inspiring shape.

"Another slave of the mysterious queen?" demanded Venner, when recovered from his astonishment. "It gets interesting, gentlemen. And what is your errand, Goliath?" he inquired of Milo.

"I know no Goliath. I am Milo. I come to summon ye to the presence of my queen," returned the giant with as much unconcern as if he were inviting the pirates to a barbecue.

A titter of amusement passed over the three yachtsmen. It was tinged with resentment, though, and only curiosity, aroused by shock upon shock, prevented

an angry rejoinder to Milo's speech that could only have ended one way: in physical damage to three idle gentlemen of wealth and pleasure.

"A summons, hey?" scoffed Tomlin. "Your queen values her rank, I think." A dangerous gleam crept into Milo's eyes, and Pearse detected it in time. "Venner," he said quietly, "you cannot let this adventure pass. Here's every element of sport held up to us. Let us obey this command, and get at least a thrill out of this humdrum cruise."

Venner was thinking of many things, and his mind needed little making up. He had never lost sight of those pearls of Pascherette's; his eye could not be deceived; they were priceless. And Pearse had not failed to notice the green jade skull-charm that depended from Milo's columnar neck, a jade skull with pearls for teeth like the altar brooch of Dolores. And Tomlin, for all his expressed scorn, was tingling with ardent desire for such piquant beauty and vivacity as Pascherette's. If such a creature were the slave, then what could the mistress be? He assumed a more complaisant attitude, and added his vote: "A good way of passing away this odious calm spell, Venner. Let us go."

"Where is this great queen, my Colossus?" Venner asked.

"I will lead thee to her presence," replied Milo. "Thy boat will take us there in a few moments. Further on, beyond that point, the ship may lie safely in the haven."

Venner called his sailing master, and together they examined the chart. It showed a sand-bar stretching off the point, a deep-water channel, narrow but accessible, close to.

"You can work into that anchorage?" asked Venner.

"Yes, sir, if the air don't die away altogether. It seems good ground by the chart."

"Then carry the schooner in and bring up. Call away my cutter, and"—in an undertone—"keep a good watch, Peters, this is an evil coast."

The shrill pipes reverberated under the

awnings, and sailors, neat and trim in white uniforms that contrasted beautifully with their dark skins, ran to man the graceful white cutter. Pascherette sat in the stern-sheets, cuddled up like a pretty kitten on a crimson silk cushion, and Milo stood erect, as firm as if on solid ground, between passengers and rowers as the boat sped shoreward. As the two craft separated the schooner stood out in veritable beauty, an exquisite thing of gold and ivory, pearl and rose. Venner's eyes lighted with pride at sight of her. Even a long, eventless cruise had not killed the artist in him. He touched Milo softly on the thigh and said with a smile:

"Has your queen anything like that, my friend?"

Milo cast a disdainful glance at the yacht, abruptly turned away again, and replied shortly: "That is nothing."

"Nothing!" said Venner. "Then where have you seen daintier work of men's hands and brains?"

"Thou shall see. Thy ship is a petty thing."

"Now, by Heaven, Venner, he has you there!" laughed Tomlin, never ceasing for a moment from ogling Pascherette, who purred with contentment and smiled slyly at the frown that came to Milo's face.

"Oh, yes, a poor thing!" laughed Pascherette, hugging her knees and rippling over with amusement. "My mistress is a great queen. These"—touching her pearls—"thy rigging could be formed of such, if my queen willed."

"And in the house of such a great queen, my girl, are doubtless other things of beauty and worth?" put in Venner with growing sarcasm.

"As witness this pretty wench!" smiled Tomlin, striving to fix the girl's capricious attention, which persisted in flying ever to Milo.

"Patience," returned Milo. "Do ye know of anything of untold worth—my queen has that which will buy it? Have ye seen a thing of peerless beauty—in my queen's house are many of its peers! Patience!"

No word more would the giant utter. Like a bronze statue he stood erect, guid-

ing the cutter to a small landing with a silent gesture. And as the boat swept alongside and the yachtsmen began to experience the thrill of near expectancy, Pearse caught sight of a knot of men loitering on the near-by slopes, and their appearance startled him.

"Good Lord, look at those piratical ruffians!" he cried.

His companions started, and doubt came into their faces. Then Pascherette arose from her seat and pressed near to Tomlin, with an insinuating, caressing movement; and that ardent gentleman exclaimed impatiently: "Oh, never mind their looks! Come on Venner! This is what I've dreamed of all my life! Come on!"

Milo touched Pearse's arm, said briefly, "Come!" and that reluctant visitor stepped ashore; while Venner, after a little twinge of misgiving, succumbed to his curiosity regarding the hidden glories of this strange realm, and followed the great black readily enough.

Up the cliff they followed Milo, Pascherette running ahead and looking backward ever and again with a seductive gesture of invitation; and in good time they stood before the council hall, the loitering pirates staring at them wonderingly, and from them to the graceful white schooner just then entering the narrow channel.

"Enter!" said Milo, and stood aside at the open door.

The interior was dark and awfully still, and the three white men paused on the threshold doubtfully, regarding each other with half-ashamed faces.

"Enter!" reiterated Milo, and curiosity got the better of them, for a swirl of fragrance eddied out to them, and one by one, until the hall was dotted with them, ruby and amber lights twinkled before them, seeming to beckon them on to something mysterious in the shadows beyond the soft lights.

"Neck or nothing!" muttered Venner, leading the way. His friends followed in silence. Then the doors closed behind them; but fear, doubt, unbelief, all went to the winds at the spectacle that slowly unfolded itself before their gaze.

"Cleopatra reincarnated, by God!"

gasped Venner. His friends could find no words to express their sensations in that moment.

Dolores glided out from the heavy hangings behind her chair of state, and stood, a vision of majestic loveliness, on the dais. Clad in her short tunic, her hair bound to her brow by the gold circlet that Milo had made, she had calculated effects with the art of a Circe. Her rounded arms and bare shoulders, faultless throat and swelling bosom, radiant enough in their own fair perfection, she had embellished with such jewels as subtly served to accentuate even that perfection. Upon one polished forearm a bracelet was pressed, a gaud formed from one immense emerald cut in a fashion that forced one to doubt the existence of such a cutter in mortal form. About her neck a rope of exquisitely matched black pearls supported a single uncut emerald which might have been born in the same matrix with that on her arm. Her red leather sandals were fastened, and her ankles crisscrossed, with such bands of glittering fire as a goddess might have stolen from the belt of Orion.

These things were revealed gradually by cunningly manipulated light effects until Dolores blazed out entire before her stupefied guests. They, seeking for relief from the spell, sought in her face some answer to the riddle; but her expression was that of a being apart: tantalizingly, inscrutably indifferent to their presence. Then Milo advanced, prostrated himself before her, and reported his errand done. "Rise, Milo, and I thank thee," she said, and her soft, yet vibrant, voice sent a thrill through her waiting guests. Dolores waved a hand toward the door. "Send Sancho in to me at once, Milo, and do ye watch for the return of my wolves."

The giant went out; yet the calm face of Dolores gave no relief to the three yachtsmen; uneasiness began to sit heavily upon them, and it was not lessened by the entry of Sancho, for such an awful impersonation of evil in one man they had never seen before.

"Sancho," Dolores commanded him, "it is my will that the vessel now entering my haven be cared for as mine. See to it!"

"The lads are hungry, lady; it is long since they tasted such—" Sancho snarled his protest with wickedly curling lips that revealed ragged yellow fangs. Dolores stared him down with blazing eyes, held his gaze for a breath and uttered: "Go! See to it! Thy life is the bond!" and Sancho slunk out like a whipped cur.

There was an uncanny hint of dynamic force in the girl's swift assumption of authority, and Tomlin found his throat very dry despite the fact that he was drinking greedily of her beauty. Venner stole a look at Pearse, and saw in that gentleman a reflection of his own rising uneasiness. And then, at that instant of shivery doubt, Dolores smiled at them; and in that same instant three men, with immortal souls, forgot everything of the world and affairs in the mad intoxication of her charm.

"Welcome, sirs," she smiled, and stepped down to offer each a hand in turn—not in handshake, but with an air that said plainly homage was due to her; and whether he would or not, each of her guests raised the hand to his lips with reverence.

"What is your pleasure, lady?" asked Venner quietly. He was resolved to show his friends the way into this magnificent creature's intimate confidence; and the resolution promised interesting developments, for each of his friends nursed a similar one. There was, even now, less of comradeship in the looks with which the friends regarded each other. If Dolores detected this, she made no sign. She gave a hand to Venner, led him to the door, and smiled invitation to the others. They followed hungrily.

"I will give thee food and wine," she said; "then I have much to say to thee. I have commanded that thy ship and thy men be cared for; to-night ye are my guests. Come! But first give me thy swords. Thou'rt with friends." They complied dumbly, dazed by her radiant charm.

They stepped outside into the glaring sunlight; a light breeze was now singing in the tall palms and making silvery music of the wavelets along the shore; far away to the southwest a sliver of sail was in sight,

and to a practised eye could be made out as the pirate sloop returning. Dolores glanced swiftly around, seeking some evidence that her commands to Sancho were being obeyed; but she saw no man—no figure save the ancient crone she had discarded and sent to the drudgery of the kitchen. With a keen sidelong glance she saw that the schooner was heavily grounded on the Point; a second glance told her that her guests were thinking little of the schooner, for their eyes never left her face. But notice was forced upon them, and the reason for the camp's desertion impressed upon her, by the weird, drawn-out scream of jubilation that issued from the old woman's withered throat an instant before her old eyes gave her sight of her mistress and froze the cry at her lips.

"Ha, ha, ha!" she shrieked, waving skinny arms. "That's the way Red Jabez taught his lambs! Flesh your blade, my bully Rufe, and bring me some of the meat!"

Abruptly Dolores's guests swung around to follow the direction of the old woman's arm, and the girl darted a look of fury at the scene. Out from the point poured Yellow Rufe and a horde of strange mulattos and blacks, and shots crackled from the schooner's rails. On the little bay two boats filled with Sancho and his men pulled frantically toward the fight, and the haven rang with howls of gleeful anticipation. Venner uttered a smoking oath, and clutched Tomlin and Pearse by the arms.


"Come fellows!" he cried. "This is treachery!"

"Treachery? Ye wrong me, sirs!" Dolores's soft voice halted them. They stared at her, and she gave them back look for look until she saw the blood surge back to their faces and their eyes lose their hardness. Then she laughed, low and sweet, and waved them back.

"Wait. I shall preserve thy ship, and give thee back an eye for an eye if thy men are harmed. Trust me, will ye not?" She paused a moment to thrill them with her eyes; they stayed. Then she sped down the cliff like a deer.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

Ivan Samakoff's Hand



by Richard Hudson

A "DIFFERENT" STORY

The following fragment was found among the papers of Peter Gill, a visionary artist, who died recently in a madhouse in Paris. Mr. Gill's bizarre etchings, while occasionally defended by an enthusiastic amateur, hardly possess the qualities that appeal to a discriminating public.

CAN a man make away with himself with his bare hand? He can, and did, I maintain. But the police think otherwise, and have locked me in a cell at headquarters, where I am now writing down this statement.

I am not doing this to justify myself to a world for whose opinion I have no respect, but because, in the future, my biographers—and there will be many of them, I can assure you—will zealously collect all that throws light upon my life and work. Besides, the police have shown so crass a stupidity in their efforts to establish a motive, that one cannot tell what preposterous theory they will hit upon, and prove, too, to their own stolid satisfaction. Take, for instance, the fatuous imbecility of that blue-eyed, novel-reading inspector, with his hypothesis of an orang-utan, *à la* Poe! to account for the wrecked bed and the marks on Samakoff's neck.

I, Peter Gill, am writing this in jail! And if my name is at present almost unknown,

it is, I flatter myself, because there is a quality in my work a shade too subtle for the beef-fed public that tolerates the daubs on the walls of the London galleries and exhibitions.

How different, for example, in method and effect is my etching called "The Window." At first one sees but a glimmering square; behind is only a soft darkness. Yet if one studies it with half-closed eyes, he becomes aware of waving branches and dim moonlight under ancient trees; and he hears—yes, hears—the murmur of leaves and of hidden waters, while about him steals the cool fragrance of a summer night. And all that I have put into a blackened square one can cover with his hand.

When I came to London six months ago, I took lodgings in those disreputable barracks by the Tower Bridge because I knew no better, and because the two broad windows opened high above the Thames with its silvery gleams and creeping fogs. And then, whatever faults my fellow-tenants may have had, they at least respected my privacy; which is more than I can say of the police, rummaging and smearing my studies with their greasy fingers!

A few weeks later Samakoff moved in. One rainy afternoon, I remember, there came a trampling on the stairs and a pounding overhead. Another of them, I thought.

Please God, he'll be more quiet than the rest. But when the steps of the movers died away, began that soft pacing in the room above.

It was a week before he knocked. "I've just made some tea," he began rapidly as I opened the door. "Russian tea, with allasch. Won't you join me? I'm Ivan Samakoff, from up there," and he pointed to the ceiling. "I hope my tramping hasn't annoyed you; I try to keep on the rugs." I was about to refuse, but something in the troubled eyes made me lay down the book I held open in my hand and follow him up the creaking stairs.

A clear fire was burning in his grate, and on the table, beside the shaded reading-lamp, stood a samovar of shining brass; but already the dust had settled undisturbed upon the volumes on the open shelves and into the folds of the heavy green curtains at the windows. Late into the night we talked before the fire, sipping tall, thin glasses of scalding tea through which the allasch curled in oily spirals.

He was an intelligent man, a very intelligent man; but frightfully nervous. A dozen times he sprang from his chair and paced up and down, smoking endless cigarettes and tugging at his shaggy beard.

When I rose to go, he accompanied me to examine an etching I had spoken of. It was a subject such as the most sentimental academician might have chosen: a glimpse of drenched garden after a shower, and in the left foreground the glittering branches of a young plum-tree.

"And I understand," he questioned eagerly, "that you saw and felt this with such intensity that it acts as a hypnotic suggestion?"

I explained again my theory of the hypnotic nature of art, but pointed out that the strange power of the etching in his hand was due rather to the character of the vision than to the mere cumulative suggestions of light after darkness, tranquility after storm, assurance after apprehension, even with all the associations connected with these since the beginnings of the race.

Holding the proof to the lamp-light for a moment, he nodded slowly. "It is the eternal spring, untroubled by the storm.

One feels that it has always been there through the years; only we have dreamed about its snows and desolations, while in truth it has always bloomed like that and always will. I congratulate you; it is a revelation of the new heavens and the new earth in which dwelleth beauty."

We became friends after a fashion. Not the kind that herd together to escape from their own empty minds, but like those who can meet after years with the same quiet smile and understanding glance. Sometimes for weeks we did not see each other. And yet I fancy I was his only acquaintance in London. Certainly, I was the last person to see him alive.

After all, if they reject my account of the matter, what can the police make of the facts in their possession? All they know is that I had been with him the night before; that the woman who looked after his room knocked, as usual, at ten o'clock the next morning, and, receiving no answer, opened the door with a duplicate key; then the tenants heard her run screaming down the stairs, and when they crowded into the room Samakoff lay dead among the tumbled sheets with those purple marks on his throat.

I was out at the time, but on my return found the police waiting for me. No, I had heard nothing during the night. In answer to their incredulity, I produced the sleeping draft I take habitually before retiring. They carried it off to the chemist's; much good may it do them!

If I had only known, I would have sat up with him that night! But he had assured me there was no danger, and pointed smiling to the single, heavy dumbbell with which, night and morning, he exercised his right hand.

Of course the police are utterly at sea. Yet when I told them my firm convictions as to what occurred on the night of Samakoff's death, and what I myself saw and heard in his room at the time of the full moon a month ago, they only laughed.

We had been drinking tea before his fire, and as usual he was pacing back and forth, his long arms tense behind him, the strong, white fingers interlocked, and his great head nodding rhythmically at each forward step.

Then, as he turned his back, I noticed that one hand was twitching violently. He dropped into a chair and sweat broke out on his forehead.

"It is nothing," he whispered; "it will pass in a moment." The trembling ceased, leaving him weak and panting. I poured him half a glass of allasch, and he drank greedily. "Strange," he said, "it always comes with the full moon. There was a full moon that night over Java."

"I was a mere boy then, just out of college," he continued, and the empty glass rattled against the table as he set it down. "Some of my people owned an island in the Sunda Straits, a small affair of about a thousand acres, mostly swamp and jungle, with less than a hundred under cultivation. When I started on a trip east, I arranged to stop off and look it over. None of us had been there for years, and the returns had been falling off of late. I found the overseer a heavily built, burly Hollander, rather gone to seed from living alone with the natives, and overfond of his bottle. He was living in a very decent, roomy bungalow; as such things go out there, with twenty servants to wait on him, mostly women.

"I had no authority to turn him out, and was only to investigate and report, but he evidently made up his mind to win my good opinion. He treated me royally, according to his lights: half a dozen wines on the table; little pigs cooked up in a tantalizing sauce that made one thirsty enough to drink them all; and then a leopard hunt at dawn, through tangled cane-brakes, where the drops of a night shower still glittered overhead on the swordlike leaves in dazzling gouts of crimson and emerald and blue. I have half imagined since that the leopard was an importation for my benefit; but, anyway, it was exciting enough, and all very new and fascinating to a boy scarcely out of his teens.

"About the third night when I went to bed not over steady, I found a girl in my room, very young and slender in the moonlight. I put her out and undressed. In half an hour she was back again, and, like the young fool I was, I never guessed until afterward that it was no sudden infatuation

that brought her back, but the overseer with a whip.

"I grew fond of the girl, although I was there such a short time. It is hard to understand here how those things are looked at in the East; but, anyway, it is very different.

"And then one moonlight night when I wandered down the path to the shore, I came across her in a patch of shadow with one of her own race. I don't know what sudden madness came over me, but I struck him across the mouth with the back of my hand. Instead of running, as I had expected, he sprang at my throat. I was no match for his pliant strength, and it would have gone hard with me had I not instinctively drawn the revolver I always carried, and fired point-blank. The fingers about my neck relaxed, but as he sank to the ground his teeth met sharply in my left hand, the hand that twitched just now." He held it out to me, and at the base of the thumb pulsed a tiny, crescent scar.

"But what is it?" I cried. "Can the doctors do nothing?"

"They know as little as you or I. For thirty years it has followed me about the earth, throbbing in my blood. Sometimes it is a mere itching when the moon is full. And again it returns, stronger than before."

Springing up, he strode nervously back and forth, his hands knotted behind him. "The girl disappeared," he continued more calmly after a moment. "Perhaps she fled into the swamps and was fed by her own people; I do not know."

Again, as he was speaking, the paroxysm seized him. Throwing himself into a chair, he rested all his weight upon the wrist above the quivering scar. Vaguely the fingers of the imprisoned hand began to clutch the air. Faster and faster they moved, while the hand strained and wriggled like a great hairy spider striving to escape. Once more the sweat broke out on his forehead. Scarcely with all his strength could he hold the struggling thing.

And then, suddenly as they had begun, the waving fingers drooped and curled together, and the hand lay powerless, twitching helplessly. "It is over for to-night," he sighed, and fell back limply in his chair.

Since I wrote the above last night, two things have happened: First, I have been set free. And I can almost believe it due as much to my identification by the chemist as the purchaser of the sleeping draft, as to the verdict of death by strangulation during an epileptic seizure, evolved by the coroner. At any rate, I am back in my room again.

Second, the morning papers are full of belated accounts of the Krakatau disaster, and the edition I have just been reading announces also the disappearance of a number of little islands in the Straits of Sunda and off the coast of Java.

Now, my theory of the matter is, that the islet on which Samakoff's adventure occurred is among those that vanished, and

that with it the girl of that moonlight night was swallowed up in the waves, an old, wrinkled woman.

To me it is in nowise incredible that the physical memories, stored up in the earth for thirty years, revived for a moment in the cataclysm, and, like ripples on a pond, sped across the world, invisible, but capable of affecting an instrument so attuned to themselves as was the hand of Ivan Samakoff.

I shall lay this paper away with other autobiographic data, and try to forget the incident. I have my work before me; and it deals, not with the shadows of pain and death that pass before our mortal eyes, but with the transplendency of the eternal beauty.



THE GOLDEN SWORD

BY WILLIAM F. KIRK

COLUMBIA! The battle-clouds are flung across the sky
And forms with uniforms for shrouds in staring meadows lie;
In staring, tortured meadows, where once God's daisies bloomed—
Where now the brave in one red grave are evermore entombed.
The Monster Mars has left the stars to bring a planet pain
And in a cloak of blood and smoke Man thrusts at Man again!

Yet far above the hellish horde—the Hohenzollern hinds—
There gleams a great, a golden sword—a sword that burns and blinds!
The shining sword of Knighthood—the weapon of a band
That sprang from fearless fathers on Plymouth's cheerless strand!
Well may the beads of terror stand upon the Prussian brow!
The Golden Sword of Yankeeland has left its scabbard now!

Its blade is truly tempered in fires of Sacrifice
By patriots brave who gladly gave and proudly paid the price.
Its hilt is set with precious gems—sweet Womanhood's supply—
The treasure trove of Mother Love—a sweetheart's fond good-by.
Crouch, Monarch, in your hall of kings—the last of Monarchs' Halls!
The Golden Sword of Freedom swings! The last of monarchs falls!

The Golden Sword of Freedom! It points the way to light!
In dazzling rings it leaps and sings the doom of Mailed Might!
Bring on your gold, O Freeman! Shape well the glittering blade!
The Only Lord will bless this Sword your sacrifice has made!
And down the ages yet unborn the story shall be told
How Freedom's sons destroyed the Huns with Freedom's Sword of Gold!

Bibi- His Mark

by Achmed Abdullah

Author of "Master of the Hour," "The Charmed Life," "The God of the Invincibly Strong Arms," etc.

CHAPTER I.

BIBI L'TUEUR.

IT will always remain a moot point if the inner, driving power which gave the final impetus to the man's deed was his animal instinct, his congenital desire to take life, or a result, brutal and crafty, yet eminently great, of that complicated emotion called patriotism.

Certain pompous, pursy, bearded French gentlemen who, robed in the gorgeous crimson silk of the highest judiciary, met one drowsy, zummy spring afternoon in the Palais de Justice, and went there over the man's record—it was entirely black, except where it was tainted with the viscous, fetid red of human blood—decided to credit the score to patriotism; decided, furthermore, to forget the record which had been taken from the files of the secret archives of the Paris police, to blue-pencil it clear across its regrettable length, and, by the same token, to give the man a fresh chance.

He himself, on the other hand, shrugged his feline shoulders in a ribald and very Latin manner, threw his flat palms with the broad, stumpy fingers outward so that the tips curled like ironic question-marks, and said something in metallic Paris slang which, translated into a semblance of civilized speech, meant that he had been bored for a long time with killing citizens and

policemen—"d'saigner les pant' et les sergots," to give the exquisite original; that it had always been his ambition to croak one of these here (deleted) aristocrats, for after all, *dis donc, mon p'tit boug'*, one is a Frenchman, a republican, *hein?* and—the rest entirely suppressed for reasons of decency, purity, and editorial policy.

Bibi l'Tueur was his name—Bibi the Killer.

As far back as he could remember—and his memory started with a day thirty years earlier when, at the advanced age of seven, a capped, velvet-trousered gentleman called Toto Laripette, who in moments of maudlin drunkenness acknowledged himself as his father, to disclaim the imputation with ferocious oaths in moments of retrospective, alcoholic jealousy, kicked him out into the street and told him to sink or swim on his own hook, he personally didn't give a damn—which—as far back as he could remember he had had no other name: Bibi—though the latter half of his name, the Killer, pronounced as the case may be with love, fear, envy, respect, admiration, or hatred, came later on—deservedly.

Bibi the Killer he was, at the heyday of his career, to his girl, his pals, his gang, his enemies, the police, certain inquisitive and fearless newspaper reporters, the wine merchants and restaurant keepers of the neighborhood, and the white-haired,

absinth-sodden, bleary-eyed, old harridan who sold fried potatoes in a postern of the Rue de Turbigo, and who every night gave him a generous twisted paper full of her deliciously crisp, golden-brown, salty wares, free of charge, because he reminded her of a lover guillotined forty years earlier.

Given his sobriquet, given the fact that he lived up to it less ostentatiously than conscientiously, given furthermore his physical characteristics—the closely cropped, bullet-shaped head crowned by a peaked, jeering cap that was worn at a rakish angle; the arrogant, beady black eyes on either side of a prying, angular beak with nervous, flaring nostrils; the mouth, cruelly thin yet scarlet with sensuousness; the loose, floppy ears with the lobes extending down the sides of his neck; and the receding chin—it was fitting that, in the cramped old streets in back of the Central Market Halls of Paris, he should be an unchallenged leader among men.

For, more than all the rest of Paris, not excepting even the Bastille, are these alleys and *culs-de-sac* redolent of blood-stained reminiscences. It was there, in the tortuous, tragic Rue de la Ferronnerie that the bigot madman Ravallac's dagger found the heart of Henry IV, best and wisest of the kings of France, and just around the corner, in the Rue de la Lingerie, that Paris for centuries dumped the unshriven bodies of the poor into underground vaults. It was there that, before the Revolution, the "bell-man of the dead," in his flapping, black hat, and long, red gown, painted with skulls and cross-bones, paraded the midnight streets, dangling an enormous bell and chanting:

*Réveillez-vous, gens qui dorment!
Priez Dieu pour les trépassés!*

and that, later on—though, as in the case of Bibi l'Tueur, it is a debatable question if the motive was lust of blood or love of country—the French Revolution gathered enormous headway.

It is extremely doubtful if, for generations back, the ancestors of Bibi the Killer kept an exact record as to their children's paternity and maternity.

But what difference did that make?

If he was not sure of his direct progenitors, his parents and grandparents, there was no uncertainty about his being a real son of the *quartier*. His people had always lived there since before the days of François Villon. Had always bred there. Always killed there. Always died there—except in a few cases when they had died at the Roquette, under the thudding blade of the Red Widow, the guillotine.

For Bibi was an Apache.

Comparatively undisturbed by the police, he had followed his chosen career until, about a year before the outbreak of the great war, a new and ambitious president of the police decided on a general municipal housecleaning. Unfortunately for Bibi the Killer, it coincided with the discovery of a well-dressed Paris stock-broker, robbed, murdered in a dark alley of the *quartier*, not far from the Rue Verderet.

To his dying day Bibi protested that, at least in this instance, he had been as innocent as the whitest, fleeciest lamb. Only it so happened that the knife which had been stuck neatly between the bourgeois's third and fourth ribs was marked with Bibi's initials, and it was more than doubtful that the police would accept his alibi; namely, that he had loaned his dagger to a casual acquaintance whose name he had forgotten and who had needed it to cut off the rind of a particularly tough wedge of Port du Salut cheese.

Anyway, sipping his peaceful breakfast beverage of black coffee flavored with cognac in a little café of the Rue de Turbigo, he read about the corpse and the knife in the morning issue of the *Petit Parisien*, and arrived at Dieppe just two jumps ahead of the police, increasing the distance to three jumps by the time he reached London, where, head first, like a rat, he bored into the dank purlieus of Soho.

He felt not at home there; neither in Soho nor in Pimlico, nor in the scraggly, smoky, jerry-built whole of the East End, including the maze of the docks whence men go down to the sea in ships. Later on he always referred to London as a singularly tough, stringy, and discouraging leg

of mutton, and he heartily condemned the methods of his English confrères.

"*Tiens*," he would say, "one takes pride in one's business, be it—well—tailoring or bleeding a citizen. And there, in London? Pooh! A brick bounced off somebody's dome! A loaded rubber bludgeon flattening a silk tile! And they call that turning the trick! These English have no imagination, and I, *mon vieux*, I was not happy there!"

So he left London.

But here, too, the full tale of it is clouded, nebulous, overcast with a haze of sordid romance.

For, strangely, a six days' sensation, consisting in garroting, frisking, and painful injuries suffered by a Member of Parliament on a clear evening in full view of Whitehall Street, and resulting in the heckling of the Cabinet by the purple-faced Tory Member for East Gravesend, who started with demanding a thorough reorganization of Scotland Yard, and ended by clamoring for the immediate resignation of Asquith and the little Welsh attorney—this six days' sensation happened to coincide with Bibi the Killer's shipping out of green Southampton to the New World.

As a stoker! And since never before in all his life had he done a stroke of what the world, rightly or wrongly, calls honest labor, since the animal instinct of self-preservation taught him that here, on board this tight, workaday ship, Bibi the Killer had to be Bibi the Stoker, or—by Gawd! yer shirkin', sneakin', bloody swab of a frog-eater!—the third engineer wanted to know the reason why he felt like a caged, helpless beast.

Thus, when land came in sight, his old spirit asserted itself. Like the flash of the free iron, swung away from the clogging, rusting scabbard, it jerked out. And he sniffed greedily when the shore wind brought the warm reek of New York out to the low-flung drab of Sandy Hook, where the ship was riding to both sea-anchors waiting for the impertinent *chug-chug-chugging* of the customs launch, and remarked to a fellow stoker, a Frenchman like himself, that he expected to gut this transatlantic town of gold and diamonds

and pearls as a fish-woman in the Halles Centrales guts a mackerel.

CHAPTER II.

"IN AGAIN, OUT AGAIN."

WHEN he went ashore, away from the water-front, up through the evil, sodden streets of that part of town, prurient with dirty memories of the past, slimy with food crushed under foot, blotched with tobacco-juice; with a sooty rain dropping thuddingly, mockingly, and the thick, chocolate-brown mud swishing up in streams; with foul invectives in English, Irish, Yiddish, Greek, and Sicilian spotting the air, with crude posters grimacing the faces of the buildings; as he continued his way through that teeming macrocosm of New York, he repeated his boast to himself.

Here, hedged by the water-front on the west, and grim, frowning warehouses on the east, in these little rickety, secretive, red-brick dwellings, with their stealthy, enigmatic back yards, their skulking gables, and furtive, reticent side entrances, was the safe place where one lived, where one had one's lair, he decided; and—energetic, arduous, thoroughly Latin—he kept straight on his way to find and survey what he was pleased to call his place of business, the streets and houses and shops where the bourgeois—to quote him again literally—fattened their swollen livers—and reddened their indecent noses; and he had no difficulty in discovering that New York was a sandwich, with the Fifth Avenue layer of rich meat between slabs of sober, dry, nourishing bread.

The avenue, with its proud, self-conscious sweep picked out in a gentle curve of lights, with its immaculate, slightly snobbish flanking of shops, its gleaming brasses of automobile and motor-bus, its human throng, leisurely and restless in the same breath, its well-fleshed, muscular, imperturbable police that stemmed the tide with a gesture of white-gloved hands, he dismissed at once as dangerous, and therefore impracticable.

But he welcomed the far West Side's strident babel with the ardor of a bride-

groom. It was his hunting-ground, fore-ordained.

For here his shrewd, calculating eyes beheld everything for the profitable and tranquil pursuit of his sinister vocation: the corner saloons with their lurking side entrances, where a man might slip in and out like a rabbit through the tunnels of its warren; the sudden, mysterious alleys cutting wedgewise into mazes of buildings; the deep cellars that gaped like sardonic, toothless maws; the squat, moldy, turgid tenements with the reckless invitation of their fire-escapes; the pawn-brokers' shops, the show-cases garish and pathetic with the cheap luxuries of the poor, and here and there the hard flash of a good diamond, often in an old-fashioned setting.

"Ah, *ma p'tite cocotte!*" he addressed the unsuspecting town; "I'll bleed you to the marrow!" And when, three hours later, his stoker's dunnage bag still across supple shoulders, he returned in the direction of the little, bedraggled street near the docks that he had picked out for his place of residence, he felt happy and satisfied and pleasurably expectant.

Down the streets he strode, his vulpine mind busy with the easy profits the morrow would bring, with the sun setting in the distant west behind lowering clouds that were like mountains of red-glowing lava; the roofs of the city bathed in purple and peacock light; the windows flashing with a thousand dazzling reflections; with trucks rumbling, trolley-cars shooting south and north, the Elevated clanking and shrieking along its steely spider's web, and motor-cars whirring by on negligent, aristocratic rubber.

He caught a swift gleam and rustle of silk, a faint breath of flower scent, as a woman passed him, and he smiled appreciatively and reminiscently.

A woman? To be sure!

Presently he would find himself a woman; and when he reached the Bowery, when through tattered curtains, with an accompaniment of rattling crockery and fat sizzling in a skillet, he heard high-pitched laughter, then, looking up, saw a girl lean from a window, pretty and pert and fear-

less, with russet hair piled up like a carved helmet and ice-green eyes beneath level, white brows, he stopped, screwed his face into a smile, and tossed up to her a kiss with the tips of his stumpy fingers—to feel immediately a horny hand clutching his collar from behind and to hear the husky, sepulchral, minatory demand:

"Woddy mean, ye dirty wop, makin' sheep's-eyes at my goil? Woddy mean?" Here Bibi twisted and turned, to the running allegretto of the girl's laughter, and saw the speaker tower above him with two hundred pounds of well-balanced muscle and flesh. "Say! Woddy mean t'rowin' kisses at her?"

And—*bing!—bang!—biff!*—right on the point of his receding chin so that the teeth rattled like castanets.

"Ah! *boug' de saligaud!*" Bibi spat like a wildcat.

He jumped sideways, leaving most of his shirt collar in the other's grasp. Out from his sleeve and into his hand, like a sentient being, flashed the short, broad Apache knife, while the girl in the window screamed:

"Jimmy! Look out, Jimmy!"

He saw red. He was Bibi l'Tueur—Bibi the Killer.

But, just as the point of his steel danced out with a lethal glimmer and jeer, a policeman's night-stick thudded down on his elbow. His dagger clattered harmlessly in a muddy pool, where it sank with a sucking, blobbing gurgle. A square-toed boot crashed into his shin as, a killer to the last, he turned on his new assailant and jumped at him, thumbs and second fingers ready to strangle and gouge.

And the ultimate result was that, nine hours after his entry into the city which he had boasted to gut like a mackerel, he found himself in the night court, a policeman on either side of him, and the judge, after about two minutes' bored deliberation, saying:

"Six weeks." Then, irritably, to the clerk: "Next case, Mr. Hadley!"

A month and a half later he was free once more. Lean he was, with neither money

nor weapon, in a strange city; yet as dangerous as a Bengal tiger.

They had not treated him well in prison, nor fed him well.

In Paris, where he had seen the insides of at least two jails, he had even in stripes still been Bibi l'Tueur; and the jailers, familiar with his record—familiar, too, with his gang and his cruelty and his infinite patience in the executing of revenge—had granted him a measure of respect which frequently took the pleasant form of a blue paper package of caporal cigarettes, a drop of cloudy, opalescent absinth, a bottle of white wine.

Here, on the other hand, he had been "the wop," or "Frenchy," or "that dago wot's off his nut," when in moments of crimson rage he started cursing and yelling in metallic Paris argot and bruising his knuckles against the steel walls of his cell, to be at once soothed with a cooling bucket of slops or some other gentle ministration.

Even so he had kept his ears wide open, and he drifted straight from jail to a certain place on the Brooklyn side of the river where criminals foregather, since, penniless, weaponless, and as wary as a jungle beast by the very ferocity of his breeding and life, he had decided that for the time being he must give up his well-calculated plans as to place of residence and operation.

First he would have to find a gang on which to fall back in case of trouble. Doubtless they would hail him as leader.

But when he entered the place, with its cozy, brown boxes, the glistening bar, the smooth-massaged, well-soaped barkeeper in immaculate, virginal white, the pleasant little homy pictures on the clean, calcimined walls; when he found the people who foregathered there, New York criminals, to be sober, rather industrious and conservative men, sipping ginger-ale and other soft drinks, dressed in pin-stripe worsted and bowler hats, with gentle manners and a five-ply business outlook on life, including their own twisted, fantastic share in it, he felt disappointed, and three minutes' conversation changed his disappointment into disgust.

For when he informed them, in his most bombastically careless manner, that he was

Bibi the Killer, they smiled languidly and asked him to tell it to the marines; and when, in a sudden fit of rage, perhaps also to show them that he was not bluffing, he jumped with clutching fingers at the throat of a Vermont tory who earned a reasonable livelihood by porch-climbing, he was grievously wounded with a bungstarter, afterward clubbed by a policeman, and sent straight back to jail on the judge's drawling, draconic decree:

"A month. Next case."

In again, out again. And not a chance at his chosen vocation.

He called it bad luck. In reality, that which beat him was the psychology of the melting-pot.

In Paris, in his *quartier*, he had worn round his bullet-shaped head as true an aura of traditional, romantic glory as a Cecil in England, a Malatesta in Italy, or a Cabot in the city of the bean and the cod. He could do what he pleased. For he was Bibi l'Tueur—and the short Apache knife was his red hand of Ulster.

But New York was snobbishly democratic, even in crime. And businesslike.

A native-born burglar who felt sorry for him and lent him twenty dollars explained it to him. Tried to, rather.

"Don't you see, Frenchy?" he said. "If I have to croak a guy to save my own pelt, I do it. Sure Mike. But I hate like hell to do it. Killing ain't a business. It's an incident—a darned regrettable incident!"

And, to return to the psychology of the melting-pot, somehow the people did not fear him; neither the laborers of many races and tongues against whom he brushed on his truculent way up and down the Bowery; nor the old, red-haired Jewess near the corner of Pell Street, at whose dusty shop he bought a second-hand suit of clothes; neither the Greek who supplied him with oranges and vegetables; nor the fat, elderly Sicilian woman who sublet to him a corner of her back room, including the privileges of the kitchen sink for washing purposes, for two and a half dollars a week, and who took a sort of motherly interest in him—and in whom he confided, as he had always confided in women.

"No, no, *caro mio!*" she exclaimed, fluttering her grimy, wrinkled hands. "You are wrong, so wrong. My man—he is dead many years—he kill. You betcha life he did. Once he kill, twice—maybe three times. With the stilet'. But he kill for the love, the passion, the great, great, burning hate. For the good reason, the fine reason, the decent reason! But you—*a bucarsi esce il sangue*—to kill for the sake of the kill? Oh, Madonna!"—and she crossed herself.

Perhaps the real reason why these people did not fear him was the subconscious memory of their great adventure of emigration—never quite understood by the native born. The sudden, keen, pitiless lifting out of the drab, sticky rut of the gray centuries because a ship-agent talks plausibly or because a ship-poster glares in hopeful green and enthusiastic chrome-yellow, and, too, because of the hope of more money, more food, and—perhaps—a dream of liberty. Then the going away from home and country; the leaving of the little inland village where the soul's roots are, where they have always lived, with wife and children and no earthly possessions except the regulation forty dollars and a bundle of threadbare clothes; the steerage journey across an unknown sea to an unknown country.

Yes! The terrible, shining American adventure of the poor foreign emigrant, greater by far than the romantic buccaneering jaunt of Spain's steel-clad knights who, centuries ago, set sail for the New World on their high-pooped frigates mounted with brass cannon—perhaps the sheer, hushed terror of it had scotched the capacity for fear in these people; and fear, the other man's fear, was as necessary for Bibi the Killer's success as the curve and glisten of his dagger.

CHAPTER III.

AVEC INFÂMIE.

ONE day in August he discovered the truth of it. It was a little after six in the evening, and, following a wave of heat that had come down like crackling,

red-hot spears, a rain-storm swept over from Jersey, driving the people to take shelter wherever they could.

The ideal weather to "turn the trick of Père Antoine," grinned Bibi l'Tueur, cracking his fingers to limber them for the grip and twist of the garrote.

Watching from a well-chosen strategical position in a dark doorway on Sixth Avenue, just above the Jefferson Market Court, where a mad, exuberant alley runs into an ancient maze of buildings at an exaggerated angle, to come out near Greenwich Avenue in a fantastic hodgepodge of mews, studios, and little shops where nobody ever buys, he saw a well-dressed, plump business man on a breathless gallop toward the Eighth Street Elevated Station.

Bibi did his work rapidly and neatly. He did not even have to use his knife—which made no difference to him either way, as it was money he wanted that night, and not the acrid tang of human blood.

Out of his hiding-place as quick and straight as a bullet! Foot crashing against chin; right hand squeezing the man's wind-pipe; left frisking his pockets—and off he was into the alley which he had thoroughly investigated earlier in the day.

But, running, twisting, turning, gliding, doubling, he found to his sorrow and discomfiture that, contrary to Paris, where the people would have helped him—*him*, Bibi l'Tueur!—here everybody's hand was against his.

A hue and cry.

"Stop thief!"

"Stop thief!"

"There he goes!"—echoed in a dozen languages; and they came from all directions—Poles and Calabrians and Russian Jews and Greeks and Slovaks—they were about him and pulled him down as hounds pull down a stag.

And—back to night court!

Only it so happened that the judge before whom he was brought this time was Moses C. Mandelson—who was a Jew, a scholar, and a self-made man; thus, by the same three tokens, a doer and a dreamer.

His was a strange theory, a stranger practise—for night courts. He held that

judging was not synonymous with condemning, but with being just; and he had contempt, even hatred, for the buckram orthodoxy of precedent. The law to him was elastic, thus kindly.

He listened to the tale of the witnesses, the testimony of the policemen, and Bibi's surly replies.

"You are a Frenchman?" he asked.

"Yes."

Mandelson cupped his chin in his hands, studied the finger-print cards which had been brought from the little back room; then suddenly he looked up and spoke in a more peculiar—a more eccentric, his critics called it—manner than he had ever done in all his career.

"My friend," he said—and addressing the prisoners as his friends was another one of his oddities which he explained to his intimates by demanding how he could presume to judge people unless he felt friendly toward them—"the court will try to discover the bead of gold in the bottom of the blackened crucible which is your soul." (Did we mention that Mandelson was a Jew and a dreamer?)

He rose with a swish of his black, silken robe.

"Court temporarily suspended," he announced to the room in general, the scribbling reporters, the policemen waiting for their cases to be called, the special writers greedy for "sob" copy, the social-settlement workers, and the morbid habitués.

Then, again to Bibi:

"Follow me." And he stepped down from the dais and led the way to his private office, where, it was said, he judged more cases than in court; where, too, he smoked very excellent cigars.

"Your honor—please!" Detective Fitzgerald, who had made the arrest, tried to stop him. "The guy's dangerous, your honor! Better let me—"

"The court is able to take care of itself," smiled the judge, and he entered his office, followed by the Apache, and closed the door.

There they were—alone—judge and killer.

Instinctively, like a rangy, dusty,

guilty-looking alley cat that senses the friendly intent of a stranger's outstretched hand, Bibi knew that the other was contemplating a kindly deed of some sort.

Wherefore he despised him.

On the other hand, he saw no reason why he should not take advantage of the little man's evident insanity, and so, sitting down across from the judge on the other side of the flat-top desk, he took an additional leaf out of the alley-cat's book of conduct.

He changed his growl into a purr.

Trusting, he looked, and confiding, and he tried his best to squeeze a tear from his wicked, arrogant eyes.

"My friend," said Mandelson, "I am sorry that it is my duty to judge you, to punish you. I do not like to punish people. I do not enjoy it. Why"—and there was an expression of utter seriousness in the man's fine brown eyes—"why do you force me to? Tell me."

Bibi pounced upon his cue. He said the regular thing.

A chance!—That's all he wanted, he said in fair English. Just one more chance! And he'd keep straight—yes—straight for all time to come.

"Give me another chance," he begged, lowering his eyes before the other's steady gaze, and thinking how easy it would be to jump up, strangle the judge, and then—away—through the back window! But no. Outside there were policemen on watch, and—

"So you are a Frenchman," came Mandelson's low voice.

"Yes."

"And—from all I can gather—an apache?"

Bibi looked up, suspicious, wary. Apache! The other knew the word, then, doubtless knew what it meant. So that was the reason why he was willing to be friendly and conciliatory! Because he was afraid—afraid of him, Bibi l'Tueur!

"Yes," he snarled. "I am an apache—and a killer, a killer!" and he stuck out his chin at a malevolent angle and went on, in sharp, bawdy-gutter French:

"*Et ben, mon p'tit boug? Qu'est-tu nous chantes?*"

But Mandelson did not seem to be aware of the implied threat in the man's words or attitude.

Very casually he lit a cigar, as casually spoke:

"There is work for a killer these days, my friend."

"Work—for—"

Rapidly Bibi reconsidered. Why? Was it possible that this man, this simple, innocent-looking man, wanted to—well—hire him and his dagger to turn a trick, perhaps to murder an enemy?

All right. He was ready to oblige.

But before he had a chance to frame an appropriate question, the judge went on:

"I suppose you know that, three days ago, war broke out between France and Germany? That the invader is overrunning your country? That France is calling all men capable of bearing arms to the colors—to defend the motherland?"

Bibi scratched his head. To be sure, he had heard vaguely about this war. But the news had made no impression on him. Less important it had seemed than his daily drinks and cigarettes, and he wondered what the judge meant by dragging in such an outside subject.

"Yes," he replied, a little surprised, "I know that there is war."

"Very well." The judge spoke as if giving judgment. "You will enlist in the French army. I shall remand you to the Tombs overnight, and early to-morrow morning Detective Fitzgerald will take you to the French consul-general." He ashed his cigar. "You say that you are a killer. Then"—and suddenly his voice leaped up extraordinarily strong and a slow flame eddied up in his eyes—"you will kill for a decent cause! You will kill for France, for humanity, for civilization! Come, my friend!" He stretched out a white, womanish hand. "Here's your chance—to make good, to redeem yourself, for all time to come. It will help you—make you—the discipline, the danger—if need be, the supreme sacrifice! Come, my friend!"

Bibi had been thinking rapidly.

The war? Now he came to consider it, it was a rather good joke on the Paris bourgeois, whom he hated and whom he

took to be his lawful prey of which fate had robbed him. They were being mustered now, and he smiled at the picture in his mind: how they were drilling their fat bodies into tight, blue uniforms; how they rubbed their obese shoulders raw with the steel of the musket and the taut, dry leather of the haversack.

But—to fight for them, side by side with them? Perhaps to die for them and their pig of a government?

Mais non alors!

Let them croak, these bourgeois, and if in the process they took a goodish number of German bourgeois down to hell with them, so much the better.

For—long live the proletariat!—such, if any, was his political dogma.

But he knew that these were not views he could mention to the judge.

"I cannot fight," he said. "I was in the army three months. I was discharged."

And the surprising thing was that, so far, he had spoken the truth. Twelve years earlier he had been drafted to do his three years, and had been mustered into one of the "convict" regiments that see service in Algiers, Tunis, and the Sahara. Three months he had been with the colors. Then he had been discharged.

Only, he did not explain to the judge that, after a particularly heinous and unmentionable offense, even the convict regiment had been considered tainted by his presence, and that the colonel, facing him in front of the battalion, had said:

"You are driven out of the army—like a mangy, vicious cur. With infamy and contempt. Your comrades do not want you. I do not want you. The regiment does not want you. France does not want you!"

A speech which had affected him not at all.

"Why were you discharged? Can you prove it?" asked the judge just a little suspiciously, the doer in him getting the best of the dreamer.

And Bibi l'Tueur lied, because he had no alternative.

He replied that he had been discharged for physical disabilities, and then he decided on a master bluff, praying in his heart

that the other's knowledge of French, if any, might be embryonic. He put his hand in his pocket, and brought out a greasy, creased, official-looking document, stamped with the seal of the French Republic, and made out in his name. It was given as "*Robert—dit Bibi—Laripette.*"

"Look," he said grandiosely, throwing it on the table; and he was in luck.

Mandelson's knowledge of French was elemental. He glanced through the paper, recognizing it as genuine with his trained, observing legal perception, and making out certain words by their similarity with English and the vague memory of a book entitled "French Self-Taught in Twelve Lessons," which he had studied years back.

"*Déchargé de l'armée,*" doubtless meant "discharged from the army"; and "*pour toujours*"—*Toujours?* Of course. He remembered. It meant "always."

Discharged from the army for always. The meaning was clear. And the next moment, leaning across the desk, Bibi had put his hand across the bottom line of the document where it read "*Avec infâmie*"—with disgrace.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS.

MANDELSON looked up, with the pity and strength of his ancient race in his eyes.

"I am sorry, my friend," he said simply; and at once, with the keen, terse buskin instinct of the Latin, the apache saw his chance—his double chance. He saw where he could kill two birds with one stone, how he could obtain his freedom and be paid into the bargain.

Speaking in a low, even voice, in that smooth, musical English he had learned so rapidly, he told the other that he loved France.

"France!" he repeated, rolling the word over his tongue as if he were enjoying the savor of it. He said that he loved her as he might a woman; that he wanted to fight for her, and if need be, gladly make the supreme sacrifice. Though he did not exactly put it that way. "Let those dirty,

peeled onions of boches rip out my liver if it helps France," was his way of expressing it; and he continued:

"I—ah—I would be a Robespierre! A Marat!"

Then, rapidly, seeing the slight look of dismay in the judge's face at his rather gory choice of national heroes, he added:

"I mean—Joan of Arc! I would be a Joan of Arc! But, *monsieur*, I ask you as an American, as a fair man—can you imagine a Virgin of Orleans cursed with a weak heart, a diseased spleen, a bad digestion, due to starving—actual starving?"

He tore open his coat, exposing beneath the thin shirt a narrow chest and a thin frame which, had he been a shrewd doctor, the other would have known to hide muscles of steel and lungs of cast iron.

"Look at me, *monsieur!*" he went on, a piteous appeal in his voice. "I know. I was bad, bad at home, in Paris. I croaked the citizens and bled the gendarmes. But when I tried to—ah—reform, they would not believe me. The police would not let me. They—*comment dire?*"—he hunted for the word he had heard in dives and police courts—"Yes! They frame me up—you know?"

"I know," the judge inclined his head rather sadly.

"*Bien!* I dream of America—free land, eh? New land? Chance for everybody! But here—ah—I have no chance. I get no job. *Monsieur!*" he wound up suddenly, intensely dramatic, ringing down the curtain with a simple appeal: "I beg *you* to give me this chance!"

Bibi the Killer had only made one mistake. Seeing that the judge was kindly, he had jumped to conclusions, had dismissed him as a fool. He did not know that Mandelson, even in his most altruistic, idealistic moments, had always at the back of his fine Semite brain a constructive, straight-thinking, keenly reasoning precautionary germ.

Mandelson was deeply touched. But he was not exactly the man to cast bread upon the water without a fine-meshed net ready to hand.

"You are right, my friend," he said, after considering a few seconds. "We must

heal the body before we can heal the soul. And so I will give you your chance. I will even help you to hold and grasp and use it. I will sentence you to three months—"

"To—three—?"

Mandelson never knew how near to death he came that moment. Unheeding the interruption, he went on:

"Yes. But I remand the sentence—well—indefinitely. In the mean time, I have a dear friend, Tim Sully, who owns a large Broadway restaurant."

He went on to explain that Sully, like himself, was a self-made man, a man, furthermore, in whom success had not atrophied the eternal charity to help others.

"Tim is a fine man, physically and mentally. He will give you a job. You will not find the work too hard, and you will be well fed, well treated, and earn decent money. Here is your chance."

"Thank you," mumbled Bibi, murder in his heart, while the judge continued:

"Wait. I said that I would help you to grasp and hold your chance."

He rose and walked to the door, opening it.

"Fitzgerald!" he called.

"Your honor?" the burly detective came into the room.

"Fitzgerald," said the judge, "Bibi and I have had a heart-to-heart talk. We have decided that the world owes him another chance. He will sleep in the Tombs to-night, and to-morrow morning early you will go with him to my friend Tim Sully."

"The restaurant man?"

"The same. I will give you a line to him. Tim will give Bibi a job, and I want you to watch over him, to see that he keeps straight and makes good."

"Sure I'll watch him, your honor," grinned the big Irishman, "I'll watch over him like a mother over her only child."

But Mandelson looked up sharply, reprovingly.

"None of your police tricks, Fitzgerald," he warned. "I don't want Bibi persecuted or hounded. I don't want you to hurt him. I ask you to help him." He put a hand on the detective's shoulder. "You're a decent lad, aren't you? You have a family—brothers—perhaps a son?" Fitzgerald in-

clined his head; and the judge went on: "Think of your brothers, your son. You would help them, wouldn't you, if they cut away from the straight and narrow path? Answer me. Would you?"

"Sure," replied Fitzgerald, moved in spite of himself.

"Good. Then think of Bibi here as your brother, your erring brother. Watch over him with fairness and kindness. See that he does not lose his chance—his last chance!" he added sharply, to the apache; then, again addressing the other: "Better get somebody to help you. Detective Kramer will do, or Bill Kirk. Anybody you want. But give them my instructions. No persecution, mind you, no hounding. Is that understood?"

"Yes, your honor."

Mandelson shook hands with Bibi.

"Good luck, my friend," he said. "Take your chance. Use it."

And the apache decided that he would. Though not as the judge had intended.

He would take the job. He would earn all the money he could, stow away all the food and drink he could get hold of, which shouldn't be difficult in a restaurant. He would reform, outwardly, assume the smug, respectable look of prosperity that goes with regular meals and decent clothes. Then—*vogue la galère!*—that stupid specimen of a gendarme would find it easier to hold a greased eel than him—Bibi the Killer!

But right there he made another mistake in psychology. For Sarsfield Fitzgerald, although gently pitying the judge, loved him as at times a big, lusty man loves a small, fine man. Mandelson had trusted him with a certain task. He did not approve of it. It ran counter to his police instincts and training. But he would live up to it and—by the Rock of Cashel!—it was himself would see to it that this dirty spalpeen of a murderous apache didn't kick over the traces the fraction of an inch.

"Bill," he said to his friend, detective Kirk, whom he had chosen as a helper, "it seems that the judge—bless him for a dear little man!—is mistakin' me for a dry nurse. Will ye help moindin' the baby?"

"You bet!" replied Bill, who was short

and broad and dark and of constructively Scots ancestry. "I'll wean him with my hickory. Lead me to him," twirling his club.

"No, no!" exclaimed Fitzgerald. "It's a different diet entirely the judge has prescribed, and he calls it the milk of human kindness. Listen, me lad!"—and he gave his friend Mandelson's instructions.

CHAPTER V.

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS.

THUS, greeted in "Tim Sully's Silver Glen—Come One, Come All—Big Tim Is Waiting For You" with the proprietor's smiling: "Sure. We'll show the judge that he ain't backin' the wrong horse, won't we?" Bibi l'Tueur, first as bottle-washer, then, as his natural Latin skill asserted itself, promoted to bus-boy, and finally to full-fledged boiled-shirt-and-swallow-tail waiter, found it impossible—physically, if not morally—to depart from the straight and narrow path.

Bibi the Killer became Bibi the Worker.

For, unobtrusively, benignly, yet very effectively, he was being trailed and watched, day and night; first only by Fitzgerald and Kirk, then, as the tale of the "dry nursing" as the Irishman insisted on calling it, was bruited about, by a dozen enthusiastic, grinning volunteers from Second Branch Headquarters, until Bibi, whose shrewd primitive ferocity kept him from taking chances without at least an even break to get away with it, simply did not have an opportunity to go wrong.

And so the days swung into weeks and the weeks into months, while his money accumulated and his body filled out, blotting the thin, sharp lines of sensuous cruelty that ran from nostrils to mouth with the solid red meats of Tim Sully's generous kitchen, while his feet, carrying the extra weight, lost their furtive, gliding tread, while his heart, flushed and congested with a crimson brutality that found no outlet, was like that of a caged bird of prey, a vulture, or a kite scenting the acrid reek of carrion—and while, across the Atlantic, with Belgium giving her little all and Bri-

tain her big all, France fought yet again the world's battle for freedom and civilization and the blessed average decencies, heroic, uncomplaining, stuffing the mouth of her sufferings and her glory with the tortured flesh of her maimed and the clotted black blood of her dead sons.

Which was of supreme indifference to Bibi.

"To be carved into cat's meat because of a fat pig of a government that is being sucked white by fat pigs of bourgeois—ah—*nom de Dieu de nom de Dieu!*"—was his lucid comment on affairs to a Spanish waiter from Barcelona who, a true Catalan, thus lawless, recalcitrant, insurgent, agreed to the sentiment with a flash of even, white teeth and a spreading of thin, brown hands.

Bourgeois!

Bibi could hardly keep his hands from gripping and clutching and strangling when he bent politely over the left shoulder of a well-fed stockbroker or plump lawyer and heard his purring:

"Here, garson, let's have a Bronx before I take a look at the menu."

But he walked along the straight path of rectitude. He could not help himself—until, one day, he became aware unwittingly that, parallel with class-hatred, runs that other strange, conquering prejudice called class consciousness.

It was early in the afternoon and he was going to work, feeling in his bones, as usual, that somewhere in back of him Fitzgerald or one of Fitzgerald's grinning volunteers was shadowing him. In front of the New York *Herald*, at the corner of Thirty-Fifth Street, his way was barred by a tight crowd, reading the latest news from the front smeared in big, black type on the bulletin boards, and discussing them according to the particular European back-stairs down which they had been kicked into the New World.

Bibi, too, obeyed the mob instinct, stopped, and read:

Prussian Guards defeated by French "convict" troops!

He smiled. "'Convict' troops." Doubtless a good many of them were his former

pals and side-kicks from the *quartier*, back of the Halles Centrales. Perhaps members of his old gang: Anatol' Chapin and Elloi Michet and that little chap—what was his name?—who used to go round with Thérèse la Rouge until one night, in a fit of jealousy, Thérèse tried to burn out his eyes with a bottle of vitriol, and Pierre l'Rongeur, and—

He shrugged his shoulders. *Bon sang!*—he thought—what fools! To fight, to die. He would like to see himself in their place, up on the front, at night, when all the cats were gray. The first thing he'd do would be to shoot the colonel in the back and—

"*Na ja! So 'ne amerikanische Lüge!* Chust one of dem damned Yankee lies!" a thick, guttural voice rose from the crowd. "Frenchmen don't fight. And dose abaches? Vy—dose is the convict troops, and I haf lifed in Baris, and I tell you dere ain't one of dem—not one single one—vot I could not lick mit mine right hand tied behint mine back!"

"*Ah! Boug' d'Dieu, d'sang-Dieu!*"

Bibi's voice peaked up like the bellow of a wounded tiger. Forgetting the detective who was trailing him, rather, not caring what might happen to him, he pushed into the crowd, bullet head foremost, elbows working right and left, until he faced the German, a large man with a close-cropped blond beard, handsome blue eyes, and a smile of beatific bliss curling his lips. For he was in America. He was safe. He could say what he pleased. This was a free country, and the people about him, muttering, doubtless pro-Ally in the majority, why—they wouldn't take advantage of their numerical superiority to ram his words down his throat. Idiots! With their Anglo-Saxon mania about fair play and free speech!

Which may or may not have been the thoughts in the German's head. If they were, he had no time to crystallize them—nor to reconsider them. For, suddenly, like a throwing weight released from a catapult, Bibi l'Tueur hurtled through the air, his knees crashing into the German's loins, his feet into his shins, while his hands clawed at the windpipe, and the words spewed out, foaming, lashing, mad:

"*Ah, sal' 'spèce d'Alboche!* Here's one apache who—"

"Aisy, me lad! Aisy turns the thrick!" cut in Fitzgerald's smooth, silken voice, and Bibi was so utterly surprised at the fact that the plain-clothes man's blackjack was not thudding down on his head that he lost his garrotte hold and the German ran away and down Thirty-Fifth Street, leaving no trace behind him except a handful of blond hair that was clinging to Bibi's grip.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked the latter truculently, as the Irishman led him away.

The other grinned.

"I'll buy ye a drink," he replied; and, steering him into the nearest saloon and sitting down in a box across two large glasses of beer, he stretched out a large hand.

"Put it here, ye little murtherin' villain of a French would-cat!" he said. "Ye may be a damned rotten egg, but—by all the dear saints!—ye're a pathriot!"

Unblushingly, Bibi accepted drink and compliment. He knew in his own heart that Fitzgerald was mistaken.

Patriotism? Love of country?

Name of a little pink rabbit! It wasn't that, he said to himself. It was only that his old gang of the Rue de Turbigo was out there in Picardy, killing, killing—Anatol' Chapin and Elloi Michet and Pierre l'Rongeur and *le p'tit homme à Thérèse*—and how many others?

His own people! His own class! *Nom d'Dieu!*—and it would have taken a greater philosopher than Bibi to comprehend that patriotism and class consciousness are one and the same thing at root—that the former is only a splendid accretion, an ennobling, an empyrean soaring of the latter.

As before, he was watched by Fitzgerald and Bill Kirk and the other headquarters men. As before, there were moments when his heart was bloated and turgid with evil, unreasoning hate. As before, he despised that pig of a government, French or American or what-not, and pitied the boys of the old *quartier* as half-wits who did not know what they were doing. Yet when, one day in late April, 1915, he read in the *Courrier*

des Etats-Unis that Pierre l'Rongeur had been decorated for exceptional bravery under fire, he smiled and rubbed his hands.

"Ah, these dirty, dirty bourgeois!" he said to the Spanish waiter at the Silver Glen. "It takes us—the apaches—to show them how to fight, how to kill, eh?"

That same evening, Tim Sully took him aside and pointed to a corner table.

"See those two gents over there?" he asked. "They're French, like yourself. Big guns back home, I've been told, come here to buy munitions and—perhaps"—his blue eyes twinkled—"to interview our statesmen on the question how long it'll take until the American mule loses her patience and kicks the guy who's tweaking her long-sufferin' tail. Wait on them well, sonny."

Bibi suppressed the jeering comment that was on the tip of his tongue. He crossed the restaurant, bowed, and put the menu card in front of the two men. One was tall and clean shaven, very Norman and aristocratic in his calm, rather bovine, blond way, while the other was a typical Paris lawyer, with his carefully trimmed black beard, full cheeks, deep, intelligent eyes, strong, hairy, high-veined hands.

Bibi l'Tueur was familiar with both their types. Often, back home in Paris, when strolling along the boulevards on a sunny afternoon, had he wished that one of their kidney might be rash enough to come into the twisted maze of streets and alleys back of the Halles Centrales some dark night—and then—

"Yes, sir," he bowed as the taller man gave the order. "Clear soup? Yes, sir. First *hors-d'œuvres*? *Bien!*" And, to the bearded man's sudden question: "Yes, sir. I am a Frenchman. What? Why am I not over there, fighting for France—the—what? the motherland?"

He took a deep breath and lowered his voice to a purr:

"Ah, specimen of a dirty bourgeois! I mock myself of the motherland! I am a son of the *quartier*! Back in the Rue de Turbigo they used to call me Bibi the Killer!"

At which the other smiled simply, shrugged his expressive Gallic shoulders,

and continued with his order, a hearty, artistic French meal running the culinary gamut from soup to cheese.

It was the tall, angular, blond Norman—before the war had swept him into the service of government he had been a professor of psychology at the University of Nancy—who interpreted the situation correctly.

"Class consciousness," was his academic dictum to his friend, Maître Toussaint Leblanc of the Paris bar, pointing at Bibi who, the immaculate waiter once more, was tossing together vinegar and chili sauce and chopped chives in the right proportions for the Russian salad dressing. "An apache—and proud of the fact—contemptuously, haughtily proud!"

"And why not, bourgeois?" came Bibi's impudent, sibilant query as, with appropriate flourish of snowy napkin and servile bending of spine, he placed the salad in front of him.

"Because, my friend," replied the professor, soberly, "you have only the right to be proud of what you—you yourself—are doing. You have no right to bask in the warmth and glory of a borrowed halo, no right to be proud of your class, be they bourgeois or apaches, unless you conform with—shall we call them?—the duties, the privileges, the customs of your class."

"I am Bibi the—"

"The Killer! So you told me. But, my poor friend, whom do you kill, *hein*? Are you assassinating people by giving them too much of this salad dressing—which is exquisitely blended, though perhaps a suspicion of garlic would not hurt it? Or are you murdering them by committing such gastronomic crimes as to serve red vintage Burgundy with their *filet de sole* or a flowery, heady white Chablis with their roast lamb? *Oh là là, mon pauvre vieux*—you are not Bibi the Killer, the pride of the *quartier*. You are Bibi the Perfect Waiter—for which I, personally, am grateful."

Bibi laughed, though the truth of the words rankled and itched, and his two countrymen joined in the laugh.

Utterly French, utterly logical, they saw no reason why they should not cover Bibi's shortcomings with the wide charity of their personal laxity, and by the time they were

sipping their green chartreuse a sort of sardonic and tolerant friendship had sprung up between bourgeois and apache, between the boulevards and the Rue de Turbigo.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTAIN DANIELOU.

IT was when Bibi returned from the cashier's desk with the dinner check that he overheard the tail end of a remark which the professor was flinging carelessly to the curling smoke of his cigarette. Quite still he stood, tense, listening, cursing the lilt of the Brazilian tango that brushed in from the palm-screened orchestra with lascivious violins.

But he caught a few words, a strange, guttural, jaw-breaking name; too, the lawyer's sighing rejoinder:

"To be sure. But only an apache could turn the trick. And we—why, we are driveling, sentimental, pap-fed humanitarians like our English allies. We'd throw up our hands in horror at the very idea. We are what our friend the waiter calls dirty bourgeois."

With which remarks they passed out of the restaurant, out of Bibi's life, leaving nothing behind them except a generous tip, the memory of an aristocratic German name, and yet another sharpening in the apache's heart of that class consciousness which is akin to patriotism—and, by reverse English, causing Judge Moses C. Mandelson, when Bibi entered his office early the next morning accompanied by Fitzgerald, to break into enthusiastic speech.

"Good!" he said. "You'll make a splendid soldier." Then anxiously, remembering the other's unflinching lie that he had been discharged from his regiment for physical disabilities: "Sure you're all right—in good enough shape?"

"Yes."

"Must have been Tim Sully's food," mused Mandelson. "Good old Tim! Why"—fervently—"he made a new man of you; a clean, upstanding man, a soldier of France! I must tell him. He'll be just as pleased as I!" And, after more in

the same vein, he shook hands with Bibi l'Tueur and wished him Godspeed.

Fitzgerald, too, was happy. He saw the apache safely on board the French liner bound for Bordeaux.

"Faith, an' I knew it before ever the judge did!" he cried exultantly. "Ye're a little runt of a villain—but ye're a patriot! Here"—as Bibi made a gesture—"don't ye dare kiss me!"

"Kiss you, you fat pig of a gendarme?" snarled Bibi in regrettable gutter-French. "I'd ram six inches of steel down your swollen gizzard if I had half a chance!"

And with these parting words he returned to his own land.

Bibi found that the war had made several changes in the Paris as he knew it. The *quartier* was more quiet, more sober, more tolerant of bourgeois and policemen. Too, new heroes had come to the front, not only on the boulevards, but even in his own *quartier*.

Forgotten were Eloi l'Michet and Anatol' Chapin and *le p'tit homme à Thérèse*. The new heroes bore simpler names: Joffre, Pétain, Nivelle.

The old woman who had her stall in a postern of the Rue de Turbigo, and who used to give him handfuls of crisp, golden-brown potatoès free of charge, told him the startling news, winding up with:

"Even you are forgotten, my little one. You! Bibi l'Tueur!"

"Oh, well—" He shrugged his shoulders. Then he asked:

"And the police—have they forgotten, too?"

"What, my lamb?"

"The little affair—you know, just before I left—that knife of mine found in the body of a bourgeois—"

"They have not asked about you in the *quartier* for over six months. It seems that you are free to go where you please."

"Ah, yes," echoed Bibi, "to go where I please!" And, like a gallant apache, he kissed the old woman's shriveled cheek and turned away from the Rue de Turbigo, crossed the bridge, and, not far from the Place de la République, entered a gray, pompous building that loomed to the sky

in a confused mass of baroque towers and spires.

It was there that, over twelve years earlier, he had been mustered into the "convict" regiment. The same torn battle-flags decorated the anteroom of battalion headquarters. The same short-spoken, spectacled, retired non-commissioned officer asked him his name and business; and when he was ushered into the presence of the commanding officer, he saw in him his old colonel—the one who had faced him on the yellow, sun-baked Algerian drill-ground and had told him that he did not want him, that the regiment, the army, France did not want him.

Colonel Deschanel-Mauret looked up from the mass of papers that littered the desk and—

"Bibi—Bibi Laripette!" Recognition was mutual and instantaneous. "You—you—" he spluttered. Then, harshly, controlling himself: "What do you want?"

The other snarled a laconic reply:

"A chance to fight."

"I kicked you out of the army once."

"*Bien*. Kick me back again."

"Why?"

"Because—as a patriot—"

"That's a lie. Tell me the real reason!"

Bibi considered. Then he spoke—just one name—the guttural German name he had overheard in the Silver Glen two weeks earlier:

"*Von Baschwitz*—"

That was as far as he got. For, immediately the colonel rose with a bellow.

"*Von Baschwitz*?" he demanded thickly, the purple veins on his temples standing out like ropes. "And what have you to do with him?"

"I know that—"

"Oh—you know! And how do you know? Only we, at headquarters, know his name, and you are not one of us. I tell you what you are! You are a traitor, a spy, and—by God!—you're as poor a spy as you were a soldier! Did *Von Baschwitz* send you? And whom are you trying to double-cross—him or us—you—" And before Bibi, utterly taken aback, had a chance to defend himself, to explain, the colonel had pushed the desk-button and

given rapid orders to the file of infantrymen who came on a run.

Two minutes later, bound hand and foot, he was stretched out on a comfortable-enough couch in an inner office, facing a tall, elderly man in civilian clothes, with a square, angular jaw, a supercilious up-sweep of iron-gay mustache, thin, sardonic lips that subtended a Quixotic nose, and immense, luminous, greenish-brown eyes—eyes which were not altogether French, not altogether European, and by which hangs part of this tale.

Suavely, smilingly, he introduced himself as Captain Daniélou.

"You have heard of my name, I suppose," he added. "I am Daniélou of the Intelligence Service."

"I have never heard your name in my life," came the choked reply, "and I hope to God I'll never hear it again, you dirty, misbegotten, spindle-shanked specimen of a cursed cooking-stove!"

The other smiled imperturbably.

"You haven't? And yet Colonel Deschanel-Mauret told me that you—ahem—" He coughed, wrinkled his forehead in thought, studied the apache from head to foot as he might some exotic and loathsome beetle, and then shook his head.

"Can't make it out," he went on, half to himself. "You don't seem like a—you certainly don't look like a—"

"Like a what?" demanded Bibi.

"Like a German spy."

"I am not, bourgeois!"

"But the colonel—"

Bibi cut in with several detailed and gory wishes as to what he hoped might happen to the colonel in this life and the one to come, the other meanwhile lighting a cigar and leaning back in his chair, waiting till the flow of bad language should have exhausted itself.

"Tell me," he asked, when the apache stopped for sheer lack of breath, "what did you say to the colonel?"

"I told him I wanted to enlist. He asked me why—and I said because *Von Baschwitz*—"

"Full stop!" came the terse command. "What have you to do with"—he lowered his voice—" *Von Baschwitz*?"

And Bibi, deciding that for some unknown reason he was in a tight corner, repressed his emotions and spoke the simple truth: How, waiting on two French officials in a New York restaurant, he had overheard part of their conversation; how one had said that Von Baschwitz's death would be of greater value to France than the destruction of three German divisions; how the other had rejoined that it would take an apache to turn the trick, and how he, on the spur of the moment—"to show these dirty bourgeois what a son of the *quartier*, a man like himself, can do!"—had made up his mind to—

"To do what?" asked Captain Daniélou, while Bibi grinned instead of replying.

"I understand," went on the intelligence officer after a pause. "Tell me—the men whom you overheard—what did they look like?"

Followed a correct, vituperative, and unflattering portrayal that caused Daniélou to burst out laughing.

"You speak the truth!" he said. "Maître Toussaint Leblanc and Professor Assolant! You described them to a T. Of course, they had no business to blab. But—well—perhaps it's for the best."

Then, bending down and untying the bonds that held Bibi hand and foot, and looking upon him with something like affection in his greenish-brown, un-European eyes, he asked:

"Can you do it?"

"Do—what?"

"You know."

Bibi smiled.

"Try me," he said.

"How will you do it?"

The answer was magnificent in its ruthless, sprawling brutality:

"Back in the Rue de Turbigo they call me Bibi the Killer, and I—ah—I deserve the name."

"But the Germans—"

"That for the Germans!" snapping his grimy fingers. "I have bled the citizens and tickled the blue-clad ribs of the gendarmes with steel and bullet." Or, to give the untranslatable original: "*J'ai cassé la gueule à tous les gens qu'a d'la gallette, et pis après j'ai chatouillé les fesses des ser-*

gots avec une étendue d'acier, mon boug'—"

"But—you have been in jail?"

"To be sure. These dirty beasts of the police pinched me, once, twice—perhaps three times. But," he added, with naive triumph, "never for murder! Ah! I got away with it—always! And I doubt that the boche will be more clever than the Paris police!"

"So do I!" agreed Captain Daniélou heartily. Then he lowered his voice to a confidential purr.

"You mean it?" he asked.

"Yes." The man was utterly sincere. "I told you. I want to show those bourgeois what an apache can do."

"Patriotism," suggested the other.

"Patriotism?" echoed Bibi. "No! *Je m'en fous*—I mock myself of it! What have I to do with your fat pig of a monopolist government? It is—ah"—a strange expression eddied up in his bold eyes, oddly changing what was brutal and ignoble to something almost heroic, almost beautiful—"it is the *quartier*, Eloi l'Michet, and Pierre l'Rongeur, and all the others. My own people. They kill out there, in Picardy, *hein?* And why, then, should not I kill, too? I, who am Bibi l'Tueur! Put me in a uniform," he begged. "Give me a chance to slip across the trenches!"

"That chance you must make yourself. You may have to pass the lines as a deserter."

"Why?"

"Because"—and Daniélou's words reminded Bibi of what he had overheard the lawyer say in the Silver Glen, "we are French and, like our British allies, rum animals. Animals that hurt themselves and the decent, great cause they fight for through some damned, sentimental, silly, humanitarian prejudice!"

"You mean—"

"I mean that, should your superior officer get an inkling of your intention, he—why—he'd have you court-martialed. You can kill with rifle and machine-gun and airplane. But the other, the single killing—deliberate, intentional, cold-blooded—the killing of one man, away from the battle-line, though his death would save the lives

of thousands of our men, will always be condemned as murder!"

"But—why are *you* willing that I should try?" asked Bibi suspiciously. "You are French, and a bourgeois. Not an apache, like myself."

A curling glimmer, like moonrays on forged steel, came into the captain's eyes.

"Because," he replied, "though my father was French, my mother was an Arab, a desert woman from the black felt tents. Thus, perhaps, I can see through your eyes—a little—"

He was silent. Then, in a dry, matter-of-fact voice:

"How are you going to prove to me that you have succeeded, in case you do succeed? You'll find it impossible to bring the man back a prisoner. Nor, if you kill him—"

Bibi twisted his lips in an ugly smile.

"I'll prove it all right, citizen," he replied. "Don't you bother on that score!"

CHAPTER VII.

GRAF VON BASCHWITZ.

WHEN, six weeks later, Baron Eberhardt von Sydow, lieutenant of the First Bavarian Chevaux-Legers Regiment, "Fürst von Wittgenstein," entered a certain cozy house half a mile the other side of General von Bardeleben's divisional headquarters, he was conscious of that shock of surprise, disappointment, and, too, slight enmity which rose up and thudded against his chest with an almost physical impact every time he beheld his superior officer, Major Graf Wolf von Baschwitz, chief of the Royal Prussian Ethnological Survey Department for Army Field Service, as it was called lengthily, euphoniously, and mendaciously.

For the lieutenant was the blond beast *par excellence*, with his smooth, honey-colored hair, his broad-templed, flat-backed head, firm, cherry lips, and unflinching blue eyes; a typical German aristocrat, a machine, hard, crunching, erect; stupid in so far as he could not conceive a thought, could only develop it, though thoroughly, after somebody else had given him the germ, the initiative.

Von Baschwitz, on the other hand—descendant of Prussian robber barons who had followed their Hohenzollern liege lords from Nuremberg to the Mark Brandenburg, south to the conquest of Silesia, north to the raping of Schleswig-Holstein, and now west, for the second time, to murder the smiling fields of France—seemed foreign, almost Latin, from a German viewpoint. His head was long and well-shaped, his nose high-bridged, the eyes deep and black and fervid under hooded brows. Even his body, small, wiry, nervous, was un-German, and his gestures, his modulated voice, his very smile. Unlike so many of his countrymen, he was not an imitator but an originator; a man of strong intellect, who neither pitied the old nor was afraid of the new.

And he was clever. Terribly, dangerously clever.

The British and French intelligence branches knew who he was. Too, they knew the bitter scope of his work. Often, in these months of war, chiefly on the Picardy front, had they recognized his fine Italian hand in a German division hurled suddenly over the top, without artillery advertisement, against a weak spot in their armor of trenches, or a lightning shift of German guns and reserves when for days the Allies had made careful, dovetailing preparations for a raid on a large scale. If Von Baschwitz had been a master-spy, gathering his information in tiny bits and details from a number of agents who worked within the French lines, the latter would have sooner or later caught and executed these spies, or occasionally seen to it that the reports which they sent in to Von Baschwitz were primed with artistically camouflaged but catastrophically wrong information. Both of which methods would have ruined the man's game.

But he was not a spy at all, even affected to pity spying as a crude, antiquated, and inefficient weapon.

He called himself, with a languid, lopsided smile, "*eine Autorität im Reich der analytischen Militärpsychologie*—an authority in analytical military psychology," and he worked, not with learned text-books and dusty tomes, but by matching his mer-

ciless, algebraic cunning against that of the picked prisoners and deserters brought before him.

Not that the quizzing of these unfortunate people by officers familiar with their language was a new invention. The British and French used it, too. The only difference lay in the results which the German accomplished—but then, he called himself an authority—and, too, in his soul, which was curiously like that of a brilliant but wicked woman, a blending of diamond and fire-kissed steel, that punctured the thoughts of the men he examined with the dagger-point of his personality.

He never bullied, never swore, never brutalized; and his chief characteristic—the very non-Germanic characteristic which caused uneasiness and a slight feeling of enmity in a thorough-paced Teuton like Lieutenant Baron von Sydow—was a sort of deep, vibrant vivacity, a continual and open response to the individualities, the view-points, the virtues, the very prejudices of the men—French and British—who were his unwitting tools.

Nor was he a hypocrite.

He was a genius in his own field.

"Well, *Herr Leut'nant*?" he asked, looking smilingly at Baron von Sydow, who stood at the door, stiff and unbending as if he had swallowed the ramrod with which at cadets' school he had been deviled into patterned discipline. "What is it?"

"Our patrols brought in a private of the Seven Hundred and Thirty-First French Infantry."

"Oh"—the major looked slightly more interested—"one of those 'convict' chaps opposite the guards—opposite the Hohenstauffen trench?"

"*Zu Befehl!* You gave orders that our raiders should make special efforts to capture one of them—alive."

Von Baschwitz laughed.

"To be sure I did. Curious to see one of 'em. They gave our guards rather a drubbing."

"*Herr Major!*" came the lieutenant's shocked protest; and again the other laughed.

"They did, my dear baron. What's the

use of trying to deceive ourselves with conscious semifalsities and unconscious semitruths when there's no neutral newspaper correspondent about, eh? They licked the guards, and though I told that precious commander of the fourth battalion that I needed a live specimen of these convict chaps—for—ah—purposes of experimental psychology—they didn't even manage to bring in a single prisoner!"

The lieutenant made a grudging admission:

"They can fight. There's no doubt of it."

"Of course they can. They don't let themselves be captured by the droves, like those Bavarian peasant swine. Well—never mind. You got one at last. Prisoner or deserter?"

"Deserter, *Herr Major*."

"Send him in."

"*Zu Befehl, Herr Major!*"

And three minutes later Bibi the Killer, in the mud-caked uniform of his old regiment, stood facing Von Baschwitz, who smiled at him ingratiatingly, addressed him in perfect French, asked him to be seated, and extended a silver case filled with excellent Turkish cigarettes his brother had sent him from Constantinople.

The two men were quite alone. There was nobody in the little house—a two-story affair, with a deep cellar reached by a trap-door from the inside of the entrance-hall in the typical Picardy style—nor was there a soul, not even a sentry, within half a mile. For Von Baschwitz was an artist in his line, with an artist's nervous, slightly nagging temperament, and, much to the annoyance of various transport, munitions supply, sapper, and ordnance officers, had insisted that his "laboratory," as he called it, should be quiet and undisturbed.

There was no noise except the steely, dramatic rumble of the guns and, once in a while, like a hysterical woman's laugh, the crackling of rifle-fire running down a trench and dying in the distance. But these sounds he did not mind. By this time they were to him part of the landscape, part of life itself.

His civil greeting acknowledged by the apache's coarse mutter, he leaned back in his chair and watched his visitor light a

cigarette with steady fingers. He, too, helped himself to one. He did not speak. Presently, he thought, he would take the other's mind and—gently, very gently—squeeze it quite dry of information. But he must not hurry. First he must familiarize himself with this new type—this new "experimental specimen." So he looked at him and smiled.

Bibi the Killer, on the other hand, said to himself that here, for the first time in his life, he was alone with a representative of that class which he hated most in all the world. He had seen Von Baschwitz's doubles walk down the boulevards, frock-coated, orchids in their buttonholes, silk hats with eight reflections set well back on oiled, perfumed heads, ivory malaccas crooked from elbows.

Occasionally he had seen them in his own *quartier*, even in his own favorite dive, but always carefully guarded by headquarters detectives when they came on slumming expeditions. They had bought him drinks, in their negligent, damnably kind manner—just as this man across from him had given him a cigarette, as the plump stock-brokers in the Silver Glen had given him tips.

He felt his muscles tauten. His heart was congested with hate and rage; doubly so, as, a few days after he had joined his old regiment, Pierre l'Rongeur and Anatol Chapin had been blown to bits by a German high-explosive shell.

He wanted to kill, kill.

But he, too, was in no hurry. He, too, must watch and observe: not psychological reactions, as the German was doing, but prosy, physical details. For, though neither he nor the other realized it, it was his skill and strength of body against the German's skill and strength of mind.

He had noticed before that the house was empty, that no sentries were in sight, and that there was a trap-door in the outer hall leading presumably to a cellar. All this was good.

He measured the distance which separated him from Von Baschwitz. About three feet. He could make it in a quick, easy jump without a preparatory bunching of muscles which might cause the other to

smell a rat. Of course, his weapons had been taken away from him, while the German was armed with a heavy-caliber revolver. It was strapped to his left, with the butt just below the metal ring that connected shoulder and waist belt, and the muzzle resting in a fold of the riding-breeches where loin and thigh joined.

That, too, was fortunate. For it would hamper the process of drawing and firing, lengthen it by that fraction of a second which, by former experience, Bibi knew to spell the difference between life and death.

He would jump direct from his chair, sidewise, turning slightly in mid air—it was a trick he had learned in the *quartier*—and thus, even if Von Baschwitz succeeded in pulling his revolver, the first bullet would miss him by about a hair's-breadth, and Von Baschwitz would not live to fire a second shot.

Bibi smiled.

He would succeed. He felt sure of it. And he added in his thoughts that the main reason why he would succeed was because that dirty specimen of a boche was too cursed cock-sure, sitting there negligent and grinning like an ape and offering cigarettes—*ah! l'aristocrate!*

Which, though partly, was not entirely true.

For that which beat Von Baschwitz—what in the long run is destined to beat the German nation, the German idea—was what before and since has beaten many another scientist, be he an expert in experimental biology, or, like the German officer, in analytical military psychology. He had studied and observed *too* thoroughly. Had drawn his conclusions too finely, too logically, leaving no room for the new element which might upset all his delicate, ultra-efficient, wire-drawn calculations.

He had cross-examined hundreds of prisoners and deserters, and imagined that he knew them all: dour Scots, vituperative North-of-Ireland men, gloomy Welshmen, impudent Londoners, bovine Yorkshiremen, nervous, petulant Parisians, pungent Gascons, cold, blue-eyed Normans, stodgy Burgundians, high-strung Auvergnats. He had seen them come to this little house, had

talked to them, had watched their various reactions, had squeezed them dry as he might a sponge.

Some had cursed, others had wept, others still had been haughty and silent and reserved. But he had known how to handle them—one and all—by a tigerlike shift and pounce of his extraordinary intellect.

His revolver was always ready to hand, though he disliked the very fact of it having to be there. But he could not help himself. For there are some prisoners who lose their temper, who go *vabanque*, who refuse to acknowledge that they are beaten. Only two weeks earlier he had been forced—regretfully forced—to shoot and kill when a raw-boned, hook-nosed desert Arab in the crimson and blue of a Spahi regiment had hurled himself at him with a terrible, guttural cry of rage.

Thus was he prepared for all emergencies, for all reactions, for all temperaments—except Bibi's. That a man might lose his head, his temper, see red on the spur of the moment—yes! That was in the cards. But he had never even dreamed of the possibility of a man like Bibi, who had deserted with only one idea in mind: to kill. To kill deliberately, cold-bloodedly, scientifically.

Perhaps, at the very last, he did understand, since in every great climax of life there is always one impression more poignantly bitter than the rest; and it is generally the pin-point of a fraction when fear first springs.

But he did not live to crystallize the thought—nor the fear.

For, the next second, Bibi l'Tueur was upon him.

The apache jumped, then turned, just as the other fumbled the gun from its holster, where it was slightly caught by the belt-ring and the fold in the riding-breeches. With the mathematical precision of a camera-shutter Bibi caught the German's right elbow with the open palm of his left hand so that the bullet crashed harmlessly against the ceiling. An atom of an instant later he was sitting astride the other man, his muscular legs crushing the arms against either thigh, and holding them as in a vise, while his lean, wiry, cruel

hands found the throat, and pressed, pressed, with thumbs and second fingers—

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO GRAVES.

WHEN, around noon, Baron Eberhardt von Sydow came to the laboratory to make a report, he found neither his superior officer nor the French deserter. Wondering, though not yet alarmed, he was about to leave the house, as, crossing the outer hall, he noticed that the trap-door that led to the cellar was open.

He became suspicious, and went down the slippery, dark stairs.

And as an Uhlan cavalry patrol clattered past the house a few seconds afterward, they heard a shriek, a gurgling, rattling noise, climbing up to a terrible, high, soul-freezing pitch, and then cut off, in mid air, as it were. It was an eery, unearthly sound, as if from beyond the grave, causing a Bavarian peasant-lad to cross himself rapidly, and the squadron leader to spur his horse into a gallop.

He found Baron von Sydow, who had seen death face to face almost daily these last months, who had braved and dealt it, ruthlessly, fearlessly, had even reveled in it in his fanatic Prussian mind, curled up in a moaning, hysterical heap, half in and half out of the trap-door.

"*Was ist denn los, Herr Kamerad?*" asked the Uhlan. "What's the matter?" And speechless, shivering as if with ague, the baron pointed down the cellar steps—

Five days later a private of the Seven Hundred and Thirty-First French Infantry Regiment sneaked out of the dim, twisted horrors of No Man's Land and tumbled over the sand-bag top of a French first-line trench, narrowly avoiding a bayonet-thrust. He was caked with mud, scratched to the bone by barbed wire, haggard of eye, sunken of cheek, with a bundle across his shoulder, and a Prussian officer's long, silver-gray cape enveloping his lean frame in ludicrous folds.

He assaulted the man who had handled

the bayonet, cursed a non-commissioned officer who came to the rescue in fluent and obscene gutter slang, called a captain a "dirty specimen of a bourgeois," made an unprintable gesture at a pompous, red-faced major of voltigeurs, mentioned to a brass-gallooned, white-mustached general that as to him—himself Bibi l'Tueur—he had done his little job for the glory of the *quartier* and his personal complete satisfaction, that he was as tired as a dog and wanted to rest.

With which he dropped into the nearest mud-puddle, his bundle tucked carefully beneath the folds of his cape, and snored a low accompaniment to the rumble of the guns.

"Utterly exhausted," said a field hospital surgeon. "Let him be."

Twenty-four hours later he faced Captain Daniélou and told him his story.

"How did you do it?" demanded the captain.

"The killing? Easy! The old trick—the garrotte—" And he was about to give a vivid and gruesome description when the other cut in with:

"Never mind that part. I want to know how you managed to get away."

"Ah! *C'tait rigolo!* Remember about that trap-door in the outer room?"

"Yes."

"Well—I picked up the boche's cape and saber—"

"What did you want the saber for?" asked Captain Daniélou.

Bibi winked one eye slowly and did not reply to the question, but went on with his tale:

"Then I dragged my little gentleman down the stairs, into the cellar. It was very dark there. No window."

"Yes, yes—but how did you get away? They must have sounded the alarm, and must have looked for you high and low!"

"High!" grinned the apache. "But not low!"

"Meaning by that?"

"*Mon vieux,*" replied Bibi in his undisciplined manner, "if ever, when the war is over, you would like to join my little gang in the *quartier*—"

"Which God forbid!"

"But if you should—and if you should have the misfortune to croak a citizen or a policeman, remember the safest hiding-place is as near the unfortunate victim of your temper as possible. The police will search everywhere, except in the immediate vicinity of the body. Down in the cellar I found, deep in a corner, a sort of wooden box that before the war must have been used as a storage-place for cabbages and potatoes. There were still a few bags there, and a lot of dirt, and I hid there. First one Prussian came down. He stumbled over Von Baschwitz's body, lit a match, and—*nom de Dieu!*—you should have heard him yell! Like a hysterical woman! Then others came, and they picked up the body and left me alone.

"And so I lay there for two days. God! but I was hungry and thirsty! And then one night I sneaked out—and so," he wound up simply, "I came here—mostly on my stomach."

"But the proof!" demanded Daniélou. "What proof have you that you killed Von Baschwitz?"

"The best!" replied Bibi the Killer, and he drew the little bundle from the folds of his cape.

Neither Bibi nor Daniélou ever told what the bundle contained. But it is a curious fact that the late Baron von Baschwitz boasts two graves.

There is one in his native town of Magdeburg, where he sleeps the last sleep by the side of his father and grandfather and great-grandfather, beneath a beautifully chiseled and carved stone Maltese cross, with the simple inscription:

Wolf von Baschwitz. Aet. 39.
R. I. P.

And there is another, wooden, cross with his name in a military graveyard on the Picardy front.

But it is interesting to consider that, in the second grave, there is no coffin. Only a square box big enough to hold a human head.



Captain of his Soul

by Herman Howard Matteson

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.
—"Invictus," WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY.

JIMMY KILGORE, who could tell at a glance whether to blow a safe from the jamb or the tee; who, with three cunning little keys, a rake, a comb and a set of steps could open any hog-eye lock ever screwed to a door, mighty briefly solved the problem of how to remove the brass wheel which served as a shut-off to the wash-bowl in his cell.

Jimmy, who had a lifer for a cell-mate, occupied cell eleven on the floor tier of the new cell-house. Immediately adjoining cell eleven was the partially enclosed corridor containing the shower baths. The proximity of cell eleven was, no doubt, responsible for Jimmy's appointment to be custodian of the baths, to gather the towels, peddle out the soap, to scrub and polish the fixtures.

It was Saturday—bath day. As the convicts, in groups of ten, came for their six-minute stand under the spurting showers, Jimmy moved among them stealthily, whispering to certain selected ones the secret of unscrewing the wash-bowl rings.

"Them rings weigh over six ounces," confided Jimmy to one con after another. "You put a ring in a tobacco sack, tie the strings for a wrist hold, and you got a sap that would put Jess Willard to sleep."

The plot: Invariably, Jimmy had noted, the deputy warden, making his nightly round for the count-up, turned through the bath-room corridor to tally the prisoners on the opposite tier; a maneuver which, for the fraction of a moment, brought the back of his head within easy striking distance of the door of cell eleven.

At lock-up the prisoners were required to stand silently at the front of the cells, their hands clutching the bars. Jimmy explained convincingly how he would hang his tobacco-sack sap in an inconspicuous place on the locking rod at the top and outside of the cell door, the strings hanging down where he could easily, instantly grasp them by reaching through the bars.

The beauty of the scheme, as Jimmy explained, was that the deputy would fall in the bath corridor out of sight of the guard stationed at the opposite end of the cell-house. As for this guard, Tonkins, a trusty, had the freedom of the corridor, and it would be like picking cherries for Tonk to mace the screw on the bean for a lullaby. Then Tonk, with a simple wrist twist, would throw the locking lever, and every con could hop out into the corridor; fifty of them, armed with the deadly saps.

"From there on it's a pipe," declared Jimmy exultingly. "All of us but six steps back into our cells and pulls the doors shut like they're locked. Three cons stand on each side of the main get-away, and rings the push bell for the night relief. They

come, two night guards, unlocks the gate, steps in, and—wham! I guess that's poor. We've got four screws laid out cold, and we've got four automatics offen 'em, and we've got the keys to the main get-away leading to the office, where, at lock-up, they's only one screw on duty. We opens the grate, pokes in them four automatics to talk to him. Open up? Say, he'll tear all the linoleum loose getting that gate open for us!"

Jimmy paused a moment, lowered his voice, and continued: "They's a stack of Winchesters in the little room offen the office; ca'tridges, boxes of 'em. We'll glom them Winchesters, march out bold like the Salvation Army, take the big number one boat and beat it for the mainland. Catch us? Sure they'll catch some of us—but not all. It's like throwing the bones for big Dick—sometimes he comes, and sometimes he don't. Well?"

Sure! It was a good gamble. A con could hardly lose, even if he got shot cold in the prison gate.

Immediately after supper, when the prisoners had been marched to their cells for the night, began the rasping, guarded sound of wash-bowl rings being unscrewed from place, the operation muffled by the wrapping of socks and shirts about the fixture. Jimmy's cell mate, the lifer, chanced to be in the hospital with pleurisy, a circumstance which Jimmy regretted, the bunkie being a cool head, and a man with sand.

Long before seven o'clock, counting time, Jimmy's sap lay hidden upon the top locking bar just outside the cell door, and fifty other saps had been secreted under mattresses, in dark corners. Jimmy tapped a code word upon the concrete wall, and the message went over the cell-house—everything was ready.

At seven o'clock, with a loud bang, the iron gate leading from the office flew open. The prescient keenness of Jimmy's peterman's senses warned him that something had gone wrong. He peered from between the bars. The deputy warden was approaching, flanked by two guards armed with Winchesters. In a flash Jimmy had pulled down his sap and thrust it into a hip-pocket. All over the cell-house came

the unmistakable sound of wash-bowl rings being rapidly screwed back into place.

Marching straight to number eleven, but keeping well out of reach of the doors, the deputy came to a pause. The universal locking-bar pulled free. Stepping in between the two rifle barrels, the muzzles of which pointed toward Jimmy, resting upon the cross piece of the cell door, the deputy warden unlocked the two heavy "Yales" and flung open the grate.

"Come out," he said to Jimmy.

Jimmy drew his sap, twirled it about his head, and replied that he guessed he wouldn't come out.

The deputy drew a billy from his pocket and advanced threateningly; the guards covered Jimmy, who, his sap whirling, glared out of the semidarkness like a caged rat.

The deputy paused. Crushing in on a man like Jimmy Kilgore, with himself in the light and Jimmy in the dark, was no picnic. And the situation hardly warranted an order to fire.

Stepping back he slammed the cell door shut and signaled to the guard to throw the locking lever. Leaving the armed guards in place, the deputy hurried to the office, to reappear a moment later accompanied by the warden, the prison physician, and two trustees dragging a coil of two-inch hose.

The water cure! The water cure! They were going to hose Jimmy!

An angry, animal-like whine sounded over the cell-house. Snarling faces peered from between the bars.

The water cure! Men had died under the hose; many men, only the folks outside didn't know it. The post mortem found always the lungs red and inflamed—pneumonia.

"Come on with it," shouted Jimmy as the nozzle end of the hose uncoiled itself before his cell. "Come on with it. I can eat it fast as you can feed it. Come on—"

They came on with it, a stream of water with a pressure of one hundred and eighty pounds. The first tremendous impact knocked Jimmy flat on the cell floor. Upon hands and knees, crawling, cowering, hiding his face, he crowded to the rear of the

cell. The stream struck him, bowled him over, ricocheted from the wall, engulfing his head and shoulders. His lungs, bursting full, ceased their function, and he lay flat in the stream which surged over and around him like a mill-race.

Howls, oaths, imprecations, the colorful, filthy epithets conceived only in a convict mind, came screaming from the cells. Medicine bottles, books, slippers, tin cups, everything loose and throwable, came showering down upon the heads of the officers. It was like a menagerie at feeding time. Shaking the iron cell doors, defiant, blaspheming souls in a material hell, the prisoners screamed their impotent hatred at the prison screws who were hosing Jimmy.

At a sign a trusty shut off the water. The warden and the doctor stepped into Jimmy's cell. White and still he lay upon the floor. They lifted him, laid him upon his cot.

The doctor felt for Jimmy's pulse—shook his head. Then he jack-knifed the inert body over his knee and a stream of water ran from the convict's mouth and lungs. He laid Jimmy back upon the bunk, felt again for the pulse, nodded his head encouragingly. Jimmy was tough; Jimmy was coming.

After a time Jimmy opened his eyes.

"You got enough?" demanded the warden.

Jimmy had not yet come to the speaking stage; so quite unaware, no doubt, of the significance of the action, he weakly lifted the hand which still grasped the wash-bowl sap.

"No, he hain't got enough."

The warden raised his hand. The stream knocked Jimmy from his bunk to the floor, where he lay in a huddled heap.

Carrying Jimmy gingerly by head and feet, two guards conveyed him to the punishment cell, an iron box without bed or stool, the door covered with thickly meshed, galvanized-iron screening, which rendered the place cellar-dark. Fastened to the inside of the door was a thick iron plate, with an iron ring riveted to it at about the height of a man's shoulders.

The guards stood Jimmy up and held him in place as his legs doubled under him.

The deputy warden fastened a handcuff snugly about Jimmy's right wrist, passed the handcuff chain through the iron ring, and snapped the other cuff about the left wrist. Then the guards let go, and there hung Jimmy like a thief upon the cross.

The prison physician, in his own mind, was not absolutely certain that Jimmy ever would recover consciousness, wherefore the light was left on in the dome of the punishment cell and a guard detailed to look in occasionally and report. It would be exceedingly awkward to have a prison inspector step in unannounced and find a dead man hanging in a cell.

But Jimmy, who was tough, finally uttered a groan, and began making a futile effort to get his feet under him and relieve the agony that was burning his wrists like red-hot bracelets.

Promptly word was conveyed to the office that "Jimmy had come to." The doctor arose reluctantly, while the warden nodded his head absently, and continued to pore over Jimmy's record.

Jimmy was the possessor of some record. He was a six times loser, had "left his mitt in the mud in six strope flops," which in jail vernacular means that Jimmy was doing his sixth term, had been photographed and finger-printed in six different institutions.

Selecting Jimmy's jail card, the warden annotated that prisoner 2876, guilty of a plot to assault the deputy warden and guards and effect a delivery, thereby lost all good time, and, in addition, faced a provisional added term of three years. Further, prisoner 2876 was reduced from grade I to grade III, losing thereby all privileges of tobacco, writing or receiving letters, or attending the Sunday morning picture-shows, or ball games between convict teams.

The prison doctor peered in at Jimmy through the wire-meshed grating. Jimmy was still groaning, but was riding the ring—fingers clasped over top of iron hasp—to ease his tortured wrists. The jail "croak" didn't like the way Jimmy was groaning, so ordered the corridor guard to leave the light on and watch him.

Something like a week before the mis-carriage of Jimmy's plot, an officious, snooping, gospel sharp had secured reluctant permission to leave a number of religious and inspirational text-cards in the various cells. Unaware that only in extraordinary cases were the punishment cells ever lighted, the sky-pilot had pasted a card just above the handcuff ring to which Jimmy was shackled.

Thus it transpired that Jimmy, as he came back painfully into his senses, became aware of the presence of the card. He read the two-line verse, read it again, and laughed. "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

He, Jimmy Kilgore, six times loser, his mitt in the mud at Sing Sing, Joliet, Stillwater, San Quentin, Jackson, Brownsville; *he* master of his fate, captain of his soul? Jimmy laughed again, harshly, bitterly. A drunken father—worse than drunken mother—born in an alley off Halsted Street, Chicago—crap shooter—stealing newspapers from door-steps before he had been six years old—back-yard sneak-thief—beggar—shoplifter—porch-climber—yegg—lookout for a burglar—peterman—he, such as he, master of his fate?

Jimmy had a creed which life itself had distilled and poured into his cup, an unlovely, harsh, implacable creed which a street-corner preacher had once ratified and verified.

This preacher sharp had said that, inscrutable and unfair as it might seem, there were babies born into the world, damned, lost, irrevocably, hopelessly lost before ever they drew a breath.

True. Look about you. Is it not so? Everywhere there are unfortunates, striving, climbing a way, falling, foreordained to fall. Are such as they, and Jimmy Kilgore, bitterly he asked himself, masters of their fate?

Again Jimmy read the verse, pondered it a moment, then began to howl, curse, shout the vilest, choicest maledictions in his amplitude of abuse.

The guard ran to the cell door and peered in. Jimmy was trying to jump off the floor and spit upon the card. He was too weak to execute the design with pre-

cision, so he fell to again and began to curse the lines, mankind in general, screws, croaks and prison wardens in especial, and the luck that had allotted him to be born off Halsted Street of a drunken father and a worse than drunken mother.

It was well on to midnight. After Jimmy's outburst the guard, thinking to quiet him, had snapped off the light. But still Jimmy saw the verse, printed in letters of fire; he said so. Afterward the prison croak explained that it had been an optical illusion come from fixedly regarding for a long time black characters printed upon white.

Jimmy stood it just as long as he could. He shut his eyes, turned away his head, but there was no escaping. As if seared into his very brain, there were the words, "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

Jimmy began to fight his shackles, to plunge, strike his bleeding knuckles against the metal plate. With the unreasoning fury of a trapped wild beast, he flung his bruised, sore body against the heavy cell door, tilted back his head and howled like a dog baying the moon.

Over the phone the guard called the prison doctor, reported that Jimmy had gone bugs right; that he was cussing out some one called "master," burning the hide off some one else entitled "captain."

Then came, grumbling and complaining, the half-clad doctor, who shot half a grain of morphin into Jimmy's tough-hided arm. Forthwith Jimmy's maunderings became fantastic, tinged of romance. He and the Peeper, his girl pal in many a desperate exploit, were fox-trotting on Barbary Coast; dining joyously, expensively at the Breakers in Seattle.

Another half grain of morphin for good measure the prison croak injected into the convict's flesh. Once more Jimmy, an inert mass, was hanging by the handcuffs to the door of the punishment cell.

At seven o'clock in the morning the guard, flanked by three other guards, let Jimmy down and handed him a granite-ware cup of water and two slices of bread.

Jimmy guzzled the water, his shaking hands rattling the cup against his teeth. The bread he refused.

Jimmy was given half an hour to walk the floor and limber up, after which came the deputy warden and the prison doctor, who felt his pulse and nodded his head—the prisoner was all right. Then they hung him up again, the deputy warden clamping home the handcuffs until the bruised and swollen flesh almost hid from sight the shiny steel bracelet.

Eight hours stood Jimmy, staring up in the darkness to where the card showed an indistinct blur of white against the dead metal plate. Master of his fate, captain of his soul.

But Jimmy was weak and ill; something of the soul of his fighting spirit had taken wing. He was too spent to howl and curse and anathematize the couplet, so he contented himself for the time by giving the fool verse a sneering once over in the dark, trying to figure out what it meant, if, indeed, it meant anything at all.

So far as getting hung up was concerned, Jimmy admitted to himself that, in degree, he actually *had* been master of his fate. He had planned to sap a screw and spill the jail, and somebody had snitched. He had been responsible, all right. Facing back, far back of the particular crime which had landed him in Brownsville, there came a place, however, where he felt his responsibility ceased; where his feet had been set firmly for him in a path which led as inevitably cellward as a blind alley brings up against a dead wall.

How the hours dragged! His arms were sticks of wood fastened to the ring. They had got far beyond the stage of sensibility, but his shoulders, chest, the remainder of his body seemed the abiding place of a million frantic nerves struggling to escape.

Seriously he meditated starting another rough-house. Perhaps the prison croak would come and give him another shot in the arm. What dreams he had had—he and the Peeper, fox-trotting on Barbary Coast, wining and dining at the Breakers!

Wise to prison ways, Jimmy and the Peeper, after they had been grabbed for that post-office job, had agreed to give their

place of residence as San Francisco. Their term, had been identical; in every probability they would be freed the same day. Both would draw transportation to Frisco, and they would meet at Charlie's on the Coast. The Peeper, because there is no woman's ward at Brownsville, had been farmed out to a neighboring State penitentiary.

But now, disquieting thought, their plan had gone agley. Jimmy had lost all his good time. The Peeper would get out, beat it for Frisco—no Jimmy. Jimmy was fond of the Peeper; very. She was young, pretty, nervy. Of course she would wait for him—a while. It was all very well for a flash in the movies, this undying faithfulness of women, but in yeggdom—well, Jimmy knew his yeggdom. The Peeper would wait—a while—then some gun would grab her.

Communing thus sorrowfully, Jimmy's alert ear caught the sound of a stealthy footstep in the corridor. A long, sharp nose, which seemed but the projection of the angle formed by a receding chin and a retiring forehead, poked itself up against the wire mesh before Jimmy's face. It was Birdhead, and he was wearing a brand new number "I" sewed to his blouse.

Some time since the frustration of Jimmy's scheme, Birdhead had been made a trusty. Of course Birdhead had earned his trustyship. How? Birdhead had snitched, had turned him in.

Jimmy tugged at the ring, but uttered not a word. Jimmy's rat eyes, could Birdhead but have seen, spoke for him, spoke the identical words employed by Jimmy once upon a time in a deadfall down in Memphis when Jimmy had ruined a good new automatic by bending it over Birdhead's skull. In that Memphis run-in, as the romanticists will have us believe is pretty generally the case, a woman had been the crux—the Peeper. Greatly desiring the Peeper, Birdhead had solicited her to ramble with him on a job.

This same Birdhead had snitched on Jimmy to palliate the painful memory of that Memphis wallop. Jimmy wouldn't have minded so much but for the fact that Birdhead was due to leave Brownsville

within five months. Also, as Jimmy was fully aware, Birdhead had knowledge of the Frisco destination of the Peeper.

"It's too bad," whispered Birdhead with a maddening assumption of sympathy. "I might not get another chance to talk to you, Jimmy. I just kind of thought to say to you, would you like to send some word to the Peeper?"

Birdhead opened his bill and cackled.

Jimmy burst forth in shrill invective, banged his handcuffs against the plate, howled, cursed himself into hoarse incoherence. Birdhead catfooted it down the corridor, seized a broom, and set to work.

In response to an urgent call over the phone came the doctor. "This here," reported the screw to the croak, "this here spell Jimmy had is ten times worse than the other; that other wasn't a marker."

Followed shortly the deputy warden and three guards. With a man clinging to each extremity, they took Jimmy down and stretched him out on the concrete floor. The doctor administered a shot of half a grain of morphin, followed presently, for good measure, by another half grain. Jimmy slept.

After twenty days in the hole, during which he had hung in the cuffs an aggregate of something over three hundred hours, Jimmy, blinking like an owl against the noonday sun, was returned to a cell on the top tier in the new cell-house.

That twenty days had made of Jimmy a good dog; there wasn't a doubt of it. The system had been vindicated. As Jimmy walked along the corridors between the deputy and a guard, he kept his gaze bent upon the floor, oblivious, unresponsive to admiring nods and winks of encomium bestowed by fellow prisoners.

After the door of his new cell, a solitary, had clanged shut after him, Jimmy seated himself upon the stool and began to stare stupidly at the wall. His blankets, a magazine or two, all his permitted trinkets and belongings had been removed from number eleven to the present cell. A mass of odds and ends had been piled onto the metal shelves of the stand in the corner.

A flash of pride went over Jimmy as he

noted that the wash-bowl had been fitted out with a new, positively undetachable shut-off. He stepped to the corner and began pawing over his effects.

When Jimmy had been admitted to Brownsville he had got by the examining deputy with a certain little trinket by hiding it in his mouth. This trinket he had kept in cell eleven. Either stupidly, or good-naturedly, the trusty who had moved Jimmy's things had also permitted it to get by.

Jimmy picked it up, looked at it fixedly, glanced about foolishly and guiltily, then kissed the trinket. Upending the mattress, he pinned the trinket into place where it just fitted into one of the depressions in the metal cot base. It was a button photograph of the Peeper.

He took a pace back and forth across the narrow cell, came to a pause again by the shelves, began hunting for something else. Finally he found it—a stub of lead pencil. Glancing about him furtively, almost as shamefacedly as when he had permitted himself to kiss the photo of the Peeper, he climbed upon his stool and began laboriously to print upon the white bricks in sprawly characters a two-line verse. Standing there he read it over audibly, "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

He climbed down, upended the mattress, and took another look at the Peeper's picture.

To gain some insight into the state of mind of prisoners whom he thought might some day qualify for parole, the parole officer occasionally glanced over the titles of books called for by the convicts. Quain, prison librarian, fully aware that he had a startling surprise in store for the parole officer, stabbed his thumb toward a brand new card upon which the ink was scarcely dry. At the top of the card was the name Jimmy Kilgore.

"Jimmy, drawing books?" exclaimed the parole officer, an incredulous grin upon his face. "You don't mean it?"

Drawing books, yes. What is more, Jimmy was reading books.

At first, naturally, Jimmy called for the

books he had heard the cons discuss; Jack London's story of San Quentin prison, "The Star Rovers." This volume interested Jimmy mightily, but he completed it convinced that the author had written under stimulus of a shot in the arm. Nothing like *that* had ever happened in prison.

A title in the catalogue caught his eye, Hopkinson Smith's "The Under Dog." If there had ever been an under dog in the world, he, Jimmy Kilgore, was one. He'd get that book.

Jimmy thought the stories not so bad. They were, perhaps, a little too finely wrought to lodge in the coarse mesh of his convict mind, but they were readable. The preface had something in it to think about. "Others"—meaning criminals—"lose place from being out of reach of those who, if they knew, would help them."

Help them. Jimmy doubted it. Still he thought much of the sentence, and tried his best to string together some connection between it and the verse printed upon his cell wall.

Laboriously he waded through "The Merchant of Venice." The old Yid, *Sky-lock*, certainly got a raw deal. Jimmy read "Macbeth," some of Tolstoy, all of which, in the composite effect of after memory, sanctioned, proved Jimmy's own belief that there were those born to be hunted, kicked, hung up by screws, laughed at by prison croaks—under dogs, whelped in the region of old Halsted Street.

Then, of a sudden, as an argument at variance with his creed, it occurred to Jimmy that he had been out of the hole three months and had not once been rapped by a screw or turned in for discipline. But that was easy—he hadn't started anything.

But what was three months? Master of his fate—piffle! You just couldn't get away from that Halsted Street stuff. Jimmy hadn't chosen to be born there; nor, in fact, had he chosen to be born at all.

Then he conjured up a vision of the Peeper, and lo, even she thrust forth a slender hand to give the edifice of his comfortless philosophy a toppling shove.

The toughest game that a yegg goes against is to blow a pete in a town that's hiked, which, translated, means to blow a

safe in a town where there are night police. On a pete job, two men work inside, one outside. The outside man is the gander, the one with the long neck, who sees all, hears all, and who has the sand to battle if authority attempts to interfere. The Peeper—five times Jimmy had seen her under fire—was esteemed to be the swellest gander on the Pacific slope. Eyes and ears preternaturally sharp, nerves deadly cool, a two-handed shot with an automatic, the Peeper's name and fame in yeggdom were stellar.

Once in a small California town Jimmy and Slammy Bat had spotted a fat pete. The Peeper was to work gander. But Jimmy and Slammy had got a bum steer; they had been told the town wasn't hiked. They had no more than sawed the "Yale" off a rear door when past the alley end walked two bulls.

"We're hiked," whispered the Peeper. "But that's a fat pete. I'll gander. Go ahead. If them bulls grabs us, they'll grab us in the smoke. Feed little petie his soup. Tough, but we just gotta do the best we can."

Tough, but we just gotta do the best we can.

Jimmy, looking up at the wall, repeated the fool couplet. Then there began to come to him a glimmer of light. He couldn't quite define it, but somewhere there lay a subtle connection between the philosophy of the lines and the spirit of the Peeper's speech. The poet might be a fool, but it was a pipe that the Peeper wasn't.

Other books, as the months passed, Jimmy drew and read, pondering with a slowly growing lucidity what he read, matching every argument for or against the spirit of the couplet printed upon the wall. Jimmy was getting to be a thinker.

Then they released him from solitary and put him to work in the prison kitchen. One day as he was packing in an immense bucket of peeled carrots, he met the parole officer.

"Put in a slip, Jimmy," said the officer in a tone so friendly that Jimmy, nearly dropped his burden; "put in a slip—I want to have a talk with you."

"I just want to say, Jimmy," explained the parole officer, "that I've been watching you a long time. You're doing finely. You've got your feet in the path. Stick there; stay out of the jungles. The beaten trail is easiest, safest."

Jimmy put in for a parole. The local board, consisting of the warden, doctor, and parole officer, recommended Jimmy for release. Above this local board, with power to reverse, is the superintendent of prisons. Jimmy was called to the warden's office. The superintendent gave Jimmy one searching look and called for his record.

"Six times a convict—led a revolt at Stillwater—planned a break at Joliet—set up a scheme for delivery at Brownsville with contemplated assault of officers."

"Nothing stirring," said the superintendent, and Jimmy walked to his cell, cursing God, man, the parole officer, the superintendent, everybody, everything; but particularly the fool verse that had betrayed him into the cardinal, unforgivable sin of weakness and credulity.

Very well. Now he'd give them a battle right.

The cell door slammed shut behind him, the universal locking-bar thrust itself into place. Almost immediately the bar was withdrawn, the cell door opened. In walked the parole officer.

"Stick, Jimmy, stick." He gave Jimmy a slap upon the back, grasped the prisoner's hand, and, as between one honest man and another, gave it a cordial shake.

There exists the strictest rule that no one may give a prisoner cigarettes or cigarette papers. Just the same the parole officer reached into a side-pocket and handed Jimmy a pack of tailor-mades. "Stick, Jimmy—stick!"

Six months passed—Jimmy had stuck. Again the parole board met.

"What's the prisoner's record since refused parole?" demanded the superintendent, fully aware that ninety-nine times out of a hundred a defied paroler turns mean and incorrigible.

"Good," answered the warden, "record good."

"Parole granted," said the superintendent.

Jimmy had gathered up his bedding and belongings to turn in at the office, but paused in the cell doorway, thought a moment, and laid down the bundle. Mounting the stool, he reached with moistened palm to smear out the verse. For fully a moment he stood there, staring up at the scrawly lines. He lifted his hand slowly, as slowly lowered it, and climbed from the stool, leaving the couplet upon the dingy wall.

Jimmy had been given strictly to understand that if he broke parole, he would be returned to serve out not alone the unexpired five months of his original sentence, but would be compelled to do also the three years added for the attempted jail break. One of the myriad restrictions imposed upon paroled prisoners is that they may not, under any circumstance, correspond with, or be caught in the company of any convict.

Therefore Jimmy wrote no letter to the Peeper, who had still five months to do. Under the parole law he didn't dare leave the State, but, what was worse even, if the Peeper learned of his whereabouts she couldn't come to him, and if she did, he'd have to pass her up cold. The Peeper was a convict, and a pretty conspicuous one at that.

It was good-by, Peeper, good-by. Jimmy took the button photograph from his pocket, kissed it surreptitiously, and put it back. "Good-by, Peeper, good-by!"

In the ensuing weeks the faith of the parole officer got itself stretched to the cracking point. Six jobs in succession Jimmy got acquainted with and quit, at the rate of about one job every three weeks. The work was too heavy, or there was too much of it, or it was the wrong sort—something. The truth of the matter is that Jimmy had to learn to work as he would have had to learn telegraphy, or piano playing; for in his whole life he had never done a tap of honest labor.

All this the parole officer knew and generously allowed for. Still he was about out of patience and out of jobs when a letter arrived from some one who signed himself

by the not overly perspicuous title of John Smith, Waldron Island. Smith declared that he wanted a man to help him on his fishing boat, and was willing to take a sharp, smart convict.

A sharp, smart convict was Jimmy. Moreover, thought the parole officer, Waldron Island is near no town, and therefore should prove a safe abiding place for a temperamental jailbird like Jimmy Kilgore.

The packet boat deposited Jimmy on Waldron, and, as directed in the letter, he struck out to walk along the beach to where a tiny bay indented itself. A shack stood upon the slope; a sizable sloop with an auxiliary engine rode at anchor before.

Jimmy climbed the hill toward the house. A mangy dog ran out and barked viciously. The door opened, framing an ugly, and vicious countenance, mitigated and redeemed for the moment by a grin of genuine welcome. It was Slammy Bat.

"I guess that Smith letter was poor!" exclaimed Slammy. "Come on in, Jimmy."

Slammy had an idea or two as to what was expected of a host, so he promptly produced a bottle and glasses, and he and Jimmy proceeded to take a snort—Jimmy's first for thirty months.

"How'd you know I was out, Slammy?"

"I got a line from Birdhead, and—"

With a snarl Jimmy sprang to his feet.

"He hain't here," said Slammy reassuringly; "no chance. He's offen you, Jimmy, Birdhead is. Set down." Slammy poked over the bottle, and Jimmy took another generous drink.

"What's the lay, Slammy?"

Slammy moved the backless chair a space nearer, leaned and began to whisper. "Soft, Jimmy, soft! Safe as a church. Billy Mitch made me a set of molds. No, no! Don't get crazy—not American money—Canadian. Safe as a cradle. We make the Canadian dough here on this American island, slides across the line to Victoria or Vancouver, and shoves it. Why, it's like winnin' a fight in the old woman's home."

Jimmy, glaring about him wildly, reached for the bottle.

"You pipe that swell boat out there in the bay, Jimmy? That there is how we'll travel. For a get-away, to alibi out if we

have to, I've got a purse seine. Do you get that? I and you are fishermen. She's a bear, that boat is. And you can be captain of her, Jimmy."

Captain! Captain! Captain!

The word rang in Jimmy's ears like an incantation. Captain! Captain of the ship! Ah, yes, captain of his soul!

Jimmy thrust away the bottle and arose to his feet, more pale and trembling than Slammy Bat had ever seen him. "Nothing stirring, Slammy. You lay me offen that queer stuff."

Slammy's countenance fell, an ugly glint began to show in the little wicked eyes.

"Set down, Jimmy," he commanded. "They hain't a boat out till to-morrow. You—you just got to stick a while. Set down!"

Jimmy returned to his seat, but waved the bottle away as Slammy, never doubting its potency and charm, thrust it toward him. Obviously pained, Slammy Bat returned the bottle to the cupboard, seated himself, and began to glower at the cracks in the floor. Jimmy also was studying the rough, deal boards. Thus, until the hands on the nickel alarm-clock showed ten, sat the two petermen.

Then Slammy arose, shook down a bunk in the corner for Jimmy, and the erstwhile pals turned in.

In the morning, after a bite of breakfast, Jimmy informed Slammy that he would walk on to the landing and there await the boat. Right away Slammy demanded to know what was eating Jimmy, and why he had passed up a pal with a proposition.

Jimmy exploded in speech. He was trying to go straight. By going straight he'd cheat a three-year increase of time. Slammy knew the parole law. If a bull or a dick was to find Jimmy in Slammy's cabin—good night! Jimmy explained that his five months was up, but his three years remained.

"You've quit the Johnson family?" asked Slammy incredulously.

Yes, Jimmy had quit; was trying to go straight.

Slammy burst into ribald laughter. Then his face pulled itself into lines of cunning,

fear, murderous rage. "You goin' to turn me in, Jimmy, for what I told you about them molds? Are you?"

Jimmy poked out his hand. Reluctantly, suspiciously, Slammy took it.

"No, I hain't going to turn you in, not in a thousand years!"

He reached into a pocket, drew forth half a dozen clean, white cards upon which he had written something and handed one to Slammy. "Don't laugh, Slammy! It works. You look over what's wrote there—think about it—say it over to yourself ten times every night, like Dan Nolan used to say his bead prayers. You try the dope on that card. It 'll take a long time, but try it. Good-by, Slammy."

Jimmy opened the door, made his way down the slope, disappeared around the curve of beach. Slammy, looking alternately after the retreating figure and at the card in his hand, shook his head sadly. "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

A long time Slammy shook his head as he continued to contemplate the card. "It's too bad. Jimmy in the hole twenty days—it's enough to crack any guy's gourd!"

Jimmy, walking slowly along the beach, finally became aware of a rowboat in the offing, a craft which had now veered as if to intercept him. As the boat approached, Jimmy discovered that the occupant was a girl, rowing slowly, laboriously, as if exhausted. There seemed something familiar about the voice which called to him through the distance.

Then he knew—the Peeper.

She brought the prow of the boat up onto the sands. "Jump in, Jimmy! Hurry! You'll have to row; I'm all in."

Scores of times, when, secretly, he had kissed the little photograph of the Peeper, Jimmy had pictured the manner of their meeting; if, indeed, they ever met again. At the very least he had foreseen the Peeper stretching forth welcoming arms, rushing to him, accepting his kiss. Now, instead of any tender romancing, the Peeper had come upon him, had told him to get into a boat and row without so much as a "Hello, Jimmy, glad to see you."

"What are you celebrating, Peeper?"

"Hurry, Jimmy! We gotta beat it."

"How'd you happen to come? How'd you know I was here?"

"I heard it in Frisco a week ago, how Billy Mitch had made a set of molds for Slammy Bat, and how Slammy was goin' to send a phony letter and get you to pal the job with him. They're coming—the dicks are after you and Slammy Bat."

"Some one snitched?"

"Yes—Birdhead. He done it to get even with me. He wanted me to ramble on a job with him, and stick, and I—I wouldn't. I took the same train out of Frisco that must have carried Birdhead's letter to the pen, givin' you and Slammy up. I took a boat, hired a launch to that little island over there, then, to pepper the trail, borrowed a boat and rowed over. Hurry, Jimmy. The dicks are comin'!"

Jimmy climbed into the boat and took up the oars. But instead of heading toward the open, Jimmy turned the prow toward Slammy's cabin.

"Don't get excited, Peeper," he said; "I just gotta flash it to Slammy."

Slammy's eyes bulged when he heard the news. He climbed into his dingey and rowed frantically out to the sloop. "Just wait till I meet up with Birdhead," he shouted. He disappeared into the tiny cabin, reappeared, hove three shiny, metal things out into deep water.

Slammy had gone south with the evidence.

Half-way across the bay, Jimmy suddenly put the boat about and headed back for Waldron Island. The Peeper protested shrilly, angrily, but Jimmy went on. With Peeper's help he hauled the boat up shore and into a clump of bushes which grew about half a mile from Slammy's cabin.

"Maybe this is just as good," observed the Peeper, looking about her. "I'd feel safer in Canada, though. Anyhow, this is a swell hide-out; they won't find us in a million years."

She drew a deep breath, looked at Jimmy, and smiled. "This hain't so bad, Jimmy. I feel like a guy that had blowed a fat pete and was millionairin' at some resort. Some hide-out."

"But I hain't hiding out," corrected Jimmy. "You kind of stampeded me for a minute, Peeper, but I hain't hiding."

"Birdhead's snitched—the dicks coming, and you hain't hiding? I—"

"No, I hain't done anything; I hain't hiding."

The Peeper stepped over, plucked Jimmy's sleeve, squared him about. "What's the rattle, Jimmy? I don't get you."

Jimmy laid his hand upon the Peeper's arm. "I mean, Peeper, I'm off it—for good. Yes—for good."

"You mean—you've throwed a ref?"

Jimmy nodded his head—yes.

Angrily, contemptuously, the Peeper shook his hand from her arm. She uttered a shrill, unpleasant laugh. "My Gawd! Pull out your sob stop, *Uncle Tom*, for little *Eva* is dying. My Gawd!"

Steadily, unperturbed apparently, Jimmy looked into the girl's flaming eyes. "Yes, Peeper, I've throwed a ref—I'm off it."

"Now," said the Peeper, lips pursed scornfully, "I suppose you'll turn me in. Go on, blow the whole works you—you Birdhead!"

Fires of resentment at the insult flickered a moment in Jimmy's eyes and died away. "Did I turn up Slammy?" he demanded hoarsely.

The Peeper lowered her gaze to the ground, shook her head. No, he hadn't so far let Slammy in.

A long time she stared stubbornly at the sand where her toe traced grotesque figures. Then she muttered bitterly, "It's curtains for me."

She looked up at Jimmy. Two great tears rolled down her cheeks. "It's curtains for me: You with a ref—me a gander—it's c-curtains!"

Jimmy took one mad step toward that pathetic little figure with the tear-stained face, his arms outstretched. Then he stopped.

With a gasping intake of breath he realized—and made his decision. But he dared not touch her, not even look at her—he dared not.

His back to the Peeper, hands clenched until the palms bled under the bite of nails,

Jimmy Kilgore came slowly to attention before his God, head up, shoulders back, chest out. His lips moved in a prayer, his particular prayer, his talisman:

"I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul."

When he faced her again he was master of himself—and of her protests, for she listened quietly to the story of his ref. He told it all, of the verses in the punishment cell, how the lines reiterating in his mind had nearly driven him insane, how, finally, he had made of the little poem a prayer, how the words, the thought, the tangible actuality, had become his.

"An' now Peeper, I guess it's good-by, all right—for three years, anyhow. I lost my copper—it's in the book we can't ramble together, I a con and you a con—not while I'm on parole—but—but Peeper, I'm glad to make the ante just to see you, to slip you this here dope of mine, my spell verse. Because it 'll work, Peeper—try it! An' anyhow, Peeper," he forced a crooked grin to his writhing lips, "what's three years, huh? What's three—"

But the Peeper had sunk to the earth a quivering, huddled heap. "I want you, Jimmy; my God, how I want you! I want you, Jimmy, I—"

Jimmy stood trembling above her, looking down at the pitiful figure. Here was the Peeper, with nerves of drawn steel, crying, moaning, beating her little fists upon her breast. Peeper crying? Peeper, the deadly cool, the nerviest devil-cat gander on the whole Pacific slope?

Then it was that Jimmy's nerve broke. He was on his knees beside her, straining her to him, covering her wet face with kisses.

"Forget it, Peeper; forget it, kid. We'll can it—you and me—to hell with 'em all—come on, Peeper, you and me—we'll ramble!"

"No!"

She loosed herself from his embrace. Her eyes met his astonished gaze, and something in them, something of courage and a strange spiritual fineness that never before had shone there, held him off and cooled his madness.

"No, Jimmy," she repeated, "we're off that stuff, you and me, from now on. You was right, Jimmy—the dope's the real goods—somehow I get it straight, now, I don't know how or why, but Jimmy—it works, it *does* work!"

She stayed his joyous interruption with upflung hand. "And listen again, Jimmy. It ain't only for three years, nor thirty years, it's—it's a life sentence, Jimmy. We can't ramble together no more—*not never!*"

"No, let me spill it all. It ain't right, Jimmy, it wouldn't never be right—I a con and you a con—no good could come of it. Can't you see that, Jimmy? When the Big Fellow wrote us into his book he dropped a couple o' blots—but we can beat that game, Jimmy—we can be o' some use—by staying apart! Then there won't be no—no more kick comin'.

"Jimmy, we'll show 'em the dope's right, we'll show 'em we're—what is it, 'captain of my soul'? You're going back, kid;

back to the big house, an' you don't give a damn about that, because the State can't hurt you, Jimmy. Don't you see—it *can't* hurt you!

"And me, I'm going to throw a ref o' my own. I'm off all that old stuff—off for good. And I'm not afraid, not no more; but—b-but I'll be awful l-lonely—*Jimmy.*"

The chugging sound of an engine exhaust came to their ears. A launch swung into sight around the bend. Coming up the slope were the parole officer and two guards armed with rifles.

The Peeper looked long into Jimmy's eyes and smiled gravely as for a moment she rested her hand lightly on his arm. Chance—or was it chance?—put into her mouth the very words she had used that night in the California town, the night she worked gander and they found, too late, that they were hiked:

"It's tough, but we just gotta do the best we can. Good-by, Jimmy; *good-by!*"



PILGRIMS

BY EDNA VALENTINE TRAPNELL

COME out along the road with me,
Away from street and throng;
We'll make a staff of minstrelsy,
A scallop-shell of song.

And in our pilgrim's scrip we'll take
Nor memories nor dreams,
Both past and future we'll forsake
For each day's sunny gleams.

At dusk we'll let light burdens down
At some gray farmhouse door,
Or slip them down in field or town
We've never known before.

But where's the field and where's the town,
'Neath what gray farmhouse beams
Shall we slip heavier burdens down
Of memories and dreams?

Then out along the road with me
Just for a little while.
Soon and too many dusks there'll be
Ungladdened by your smile.

Bob Bowen Comes to Town

by H. Bedford-Jones

CHAPTER I.

MINING STOCK.

THE fat man squeezed himself into the chair of the smoking-room, eyed the lean man and the drummer who had stretched out on the cushioned seat, wiped his beaded brow, and sighed.

"This central California," he observed squeakily, "is the hottest place this side of Topheth! Thank Heaven, we get into Frisco to-night."

The drummer from San Francisco resented the diminutive and gave him a casual stare. The lean man said nothing. Then the drummer turned to the lean man and picked up a thread of conversation which had apparently been broken by the fat man's entrance.

"This here ruby silver, now," he argued. "I've heard it ain't up to snuff. Ain't nothin' in working it, they tell me."

The lean man smiled. When he smiled, his jaw looked a little leaner and stronger, and he was quite a likeable chap.

"You can hear 'most anything, especially about ores," he remarked, between pulls at his cigar. "But Tonopah was founded on ruby silver, and the Tonopah mines are not exactly poor properties to own." His eyes twinkled, as if at some secret jest.

"But they tell me," persisted the drummer, "that ruby silver's got too much arsenic in it to make development and smelting pay. Besides it comes in small veins—"

"It has not too much arsenic to make

smelting pay—sometimes! It does not come in small veins—sometimes! Look at the Yellow Jack, the richest mine over at Tonopah! They busted into ruby silver; last week a bunch of mining sharks come and look over the outcrop. They wire east, and their principals pay a cool million and a half cash for the property. That's what ruby silver did for the Yellow Jack!"

"How d'you know so much about it?" demanded the drummer. "You been up that way yourself, eh?"

"I'm the man who sold out the Yellow Jack." The lean man smiled again as he threw back his elbows into the cushions and puffed his cigar.

"Gee!" The drummer stared sidewise at his informant. Very manifestly, that mention of a million and a half was running in his mind. His eyes began to bulge under the force of impact. "Gee! Say, are you stringin' me?"

Carelessly, the lean man reached into his vest pocket and extended a pasteboard.

"Here's my card." The twinkle in his gray eyes deepened a bit. "Bob Bowen—I guess 'most everybody around Tonopah knows me. I'm going to Frisco to sell a couple more mines."

This time, the drummer took no umbrage at the hated word "Frisco." Instead, he put out his hand with quick affability.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Bowen! Here's my card. Going to the Palace?"

Before the lean man could respond, the fat man leaned forward in his chair. He stared intently at Bowen, then spoke.

"Do I understand, sir," he squeaked, "that you are Robert Bowen, and that you have sold the Yellow Jack mine?"

"You do," said Bowen, eying him.

"Upon my word!" The ejaculation was one of surprise and was followed by a chuckle. "My name is Dickover—of New York, Mr. Bowen. If I'm not mistaken, it was my agent who bought that mine of yours! Am I right?"

Bowen's gray eyes hardened for a moment, and then they twinkled again and his lean hand shot forth.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed heartily, "Talk about unadulterated coincidence! And you're actually Dickover; *the* Dickover? You're the man who owns half the copper mines in Arizona and two-thirds of Tonopah?"

"Uhuh. Glad to meet you, Bowen. Going to Frisco, are you?"

The drummer looked from one to the other, agape. And small wonder! The name of Dickover was known wherever ores were smelted or mining stocks sold.

Bowen and Dickover gazed at each other, appraisingly. After a moment they began to discuss mining stocks. The drummer listened attentively, and after venturing one timid assertion which was promptly quashed by Dickover, ventured no more. At length the train slowed down, and he sprang to his feet.

"Gee, I'd plumb forgotten that I had to make a stop!" he said regretfully, and held out his hand. "Mighty glad to 've met you, Mr. Bowen. And you, Mr. Dickover. Mighty glad! May see you at the Palace in three-four days. Look me up, won't you? So-long."

So, breezily, he swung out of the smoking-room and from the train. Bowen carelessly watched him depart, then sat up with quickening interest.

"Gone into the telegraph office—"

The great magnate broke in with a falsetto chuckle.

"Sure! You can gamble that he knows one or two newspaper men in Frisco. He's tipping 'em off that we're on the Limited. Get our names in the paper."

Bowen looked a trifle startled. "Oh, hell!" he uttered disgustedly.

The two smoked in silence, no one else entering their compartment. Slowly the train pulled out and with gathering speed slipped westward. The fat man leaned forward again, his eyes on Bowen. Mirth shook his ponderous frame.

"Say!" he uttered. "I happen to know about that Yellow Jack mine. It was sold to Dickover of New York, all right; but it was sold by a big Swede named Olafson. No offense, pardner—but you're some liar! What made you string that poor boob?"

Bowen laughed unassumedly, and the fat man laughed in sympathy with him.

"He asked too many questions—too curious. Anyway, I told him the exact truth!"

"Come on, come on!" squeaked the fat man scornfully. "I'm no chicken. You can't put it over *me*, young man!"

"I'm not trying to," said Bowen coolly, his eyes twinkling. "It's a matter of record that I sold the Yellow Jack mine. Only, as it happens, I sold it to Olafson two years ago, before we dreamed there was any ruby ore in that locality! And I sold it for five hundred dollars. Now who's the boob? Me, Bob Bowen! Don't hold back, stranger; when old Olafson sold out for a million and a half, I quit Tonopah for good."

The fat man chuckled. The chuckle deepened into a billowing laugh that shook his broad frame, and the laugh became a roar of mirth. Bowen grinned wryly.

"Laugh your fool head off—I deserve it!" he went on. "Still, I'll hand it to you at that. You with your talk of Dickover! That's what made our late friend really sit up and rubber. Did you notice what reverent attention he paid to your fool dissertation on curb stocks? I'll bet a nickel he'll invest twenty dollars or so in Big Daisy or Apex Crown on the strength of your remarks."

The fat man choked over his cigar, and flung it away.

"Didn't you think much of my spiel?" he demanded. "Why, I thought I knew a little—"

"Huh!" grunted Bowen, yet no whit unpleasantly. "Stranger, if you really want to *learn* a little about curb stocks, you go

and float around the mining country a bit. If I took your pointers on stocks, I'd be in a poorhouse next month!"

"Then you're a broker?"

"No. Not by a long sight!" snapped Bowen. "I play a straight game."

"No offense." The fat man chuckled again. "You're really going to sell a couple of mines in Frisco? Or was that bunk, too?"

"No, that was straight enough; not the selling part, maybe, but the trying." Bowen sighed a little, and older lines showed in his lean face. "I've got two properties close in to the Yellow Jack."

"Why didn't you try selling them to Dickover's agent?"

"Him!" Bowen grunted in disgust. "Stranger, that guy Henderson, just between you and me, is crooked as hell! Know what he did? Made Olafson give him fifty thousand dollars before he'd approve the sale! I sure do feel sorry for old man Dickover; some day that confidential agent, Henderson, is going to get into him good and deep, believe me!"

The fat man carefully extracted two fat, gold-banded, amazing cigars from a case, and extended one to Bowen.

"Smoke. You seem to be sore on that agent."

"Not me, stranger. You can ask anybody on the ground."

"H-m! Going to the Palace, I suppose? Best way to sell mines is to put up at the best place and make a splurge. But you know that, I guess."

"I didn't; but maybe I'll take your advice. It listens good. No, don't get the notion that I'm sore on the Dickover crowd. My ground isn't the sort they're after. It's low-grade ore and heaps of it. I'll get after the low-graders in Frisco, see?"

The fat man nodded knowingly. "What are your properties?"

"The Sunburst and the Golden Lode."

For a space the two men smoked in silence. Bowen enjoyed his cigar; it had been long months since he had smoked a cigar whose aroma even approached this. Evidently the fat man was no pauper.

The word struck bitterness into Bowen. Pauper! He himself had just thirty dol-

lars to his name. He would look fine, going to the Palace! Yet, why not? He could get by with it and let the bill run, on his appearance; if he sold his two mines, or either of them, everything would be fine.

And if not—well, something would turn up.

"Yep," he said abruptly, ending his thoughts in speech before he could check the impulse, "I guess that was good advice. I'll go to the Palace."

The fat man eyed him shrewdly, but Bowen was again lost in frowning thought.

At eight that evening the Limited was "in." Bowen took a taxi up to the Palace. When he stepped up to the register of the big Market Street hostelry, he found his way blocked by the bulky figure of the fat man, who had just finished signing. The fat man turned from the desk, saw Bowen, and took him by the arm.

"Say!" he exclaimed. "Just a minute, Bowen. I want to thank you, old man, for that tip about my agent. I'll sure bear it in mind. You're all right!"

Slapping Bowen on the shoulder, he departed after an obsequious bellhop. For a moment Bob Bowen did not understand that speech; but as he leaned over the register and saw the signature of the fat man, he gulped in sudden, stark amazement.

Great glory! The fat man *was* Dickover, after all!

CHAPTER II.

CALLED IN FOR CONSULTATION.

THAT evident recognition, that low murmur of confidential speech, that friendly slap on the shoulder, turned the trick. This Robert Bowen of Tonopah was manifestly known to the great Dickover; was palpably a friend of the great Dickover; was clearly and openly a confidant of the great Dickover!

Realizing this, Bowen grinned to himself as the desk clerk doffed all haughtiness and became cordially human. He realized it with greater emphasis as he turned from the desk and found a brisk young man at his elbow with extended card.

"Mr. Bowen? I'm Harkness of the *Chronicle*. May I have two minutes of your time?"

Bowen affected to eye the young man in consideration.

Publicity! Well, why not? It might affect untold wonders for him. He was arriving in San Francisco unknown and unknowing. He had ore samples and assayers' reports galore in his grip; but these might do him no good unless he got the impetus he needed. And publicity would give it to him. At least, publicity could not hurt him!

"Sure," he said, nodding toward the parlors. "Come along and sit down."

A moment later the two men pulled chairs together and relaxed comfortably.

"Shoot," commanded Bowen laconically. The reporter grinned.

"I got a tip that you sold the Yellow Jack mine to Dickover for a million and—"

"Pause right there, Harkness!" Bowen lifted his hand, but smiled in his whimsical, likable fashion. "You've got it wrong. Dickover has just bought the Yellow Jack, but not from me. Don't start me off with a false report like that, for the love of Mike!"

"Whew! Good thing you put me wise," said Harkness frankly. "Well, do you mind telling me what mine you did sell to Dickover?"

Bowen gazed at him again, heavy-lidded. Was this rank deception? He decided that it was not. There was nothing crooked about it. Besides, Dickover had certainly known just how his words and manner to Bowen would be seen and recognized; Dickover had tried to do him a good turn. He was justified in taking advantage of the situation.

"Frankly, Harkness," said Bowen slowly, "I don't want to name any names. I'm here to try and dispose of some low-grade properties; rich in ore, but not in rich ore. Maybe you know that the Dickover people touch nothing but pretty rich propositions in the silver field."

"Sure, I understand." Harkness nodded assent. "But I heard a rumor that Dickover was here for the purpose of opening up

a low-grade system; somebody had invented a means of smelting—"

"Nothing to it," asserted Bowen. "At least, I was talking about it with Dickover on the train, and he didn't say—"

He checked himself abruptly. He had no business talking like this. Harkness, however, came to his feet as if unwilling to detain the magnate further.

"Much obliged for your time, Mr. Bowen; mighty good of you, I'm sure! No special news from Tonopah way? Nothing on the inside that you'd pass along—"

"Oh, sure!" Bowen grinned. "The Yellow Jack was sold to Dickover by a Swede named Olafson. I sold the mine to Olafson two years ago—for five hundred beans!"

Harkness whistled. "Say—but you wouldn't let me use that, of course."

"Go ahead. I should worry!" Bowen chuckled. "The joke is on me, and everybody up at Tonopah knows it. Only don't make me out a fool, Harkness; two years ago there was no ruby vein known in that property."

"Trust me! Thanks, a thousand times."

Bowen went to his room, and sighed at the luxury of it. After that talk with the mining reporter, he had almost believed in his own assured wealth.

When he sought the "hotel personals" in the next morning's *Chronicle*, he smiled!

With Mr. Dickover, on the Overland, arrived Mr. Robert Bowen, of Tonopah, who, it is rumored, has recently disposed of large holdings in the Dickover interests. Mr. Bowen is heavily interested in low-grade silver properties near Tonopah.

And upon the mining page were separate stories; one concerning the Yellow Jack, the other, by the authority of Dickover himself, flatly contradicting the rumor that the Dickover interests had anything to do with low-grade silver ores.

"If nobody calls my little bluff, all right!" thought Bowen. "Now for work."

Having a list of every one who might put capital into his holdings, Bowen engaged a car by the day and set forth.

At four that afternoon, with ten dollars

left in his pocket and no hope left in his soul, Bob Bowen of Tonopah reentered his room at the hotel and threw down his grip.

He had covered everybody, even to those in whom he had looked for no interest. And always the same story: courtesy, a good reception, growing caution, flat refusal. It seemed that nobody in San Francisco would put a cent into low-grade silver. The Arizona crash had scared every investor away from mines for the next six months.

Bowen swore savagely to himself. Then, at the jingle of the telephone bell, he stumbled across the room to the instrument.

"Mr. Bowen? A party has called you three times since this morning. Left the number: Mission 34852. Do you wish to call them?"

"If you please."

Bowen hung up. Sudden hope was reborn within him for a brief moment. Who was so infernally anxious to see him? Who but some one to whom he had talked that morning—some one who wanted him to return—some one who now wanted to invest!

The telephone jingled again.

"Mr. Bowen?" To his intense disappointment, a feminine voice impinged upon his ear. Then his feeling changed. It was a nice voice and he liked it. It held a softly appealing note. He imagined that it held a trace of tears.

"Mr. Bowen, I'm a stranger to you; my name is Alice Ferguson. I used to be a stenographer for your friend Judge Lyman in Tonopah. In this morning's paper I saw that you were here, and I wondered if I might see you for five minutes on a matter of business. It—it is about some stock in Apex Crown, and it means everything to me; and if I could possibly impose on you to the extent of asking your advice—"

"My dear Miss Ferguson," exclaimed Bowen, warmth in his voice, "I remember you very well indeed, although I never met you formally. Sure, I'll be only too glad to do anything in my power. Where are you now?"

"In my office at the Crothers Building. I'll come over—"

"Not a bit of it! I'll be there in five minutes. Good-by!"

Bob Bowen remembered Judge Lyman's stenographer as a girl not particularly striking, but looking very feminine, capable, and as level-headed as a girl could be. He seized his hat and sought the quickest way to the Crothers Building.

As he strode along, his mind was busy—very busy. Apex Crown! That was a small producing mine over in the Tonopah district; like his own futures, Apex Crown was low-grade ore and barely paid expenses. It had been scraping alone for about three years with the stock down to five cents and less.

But on the train, the great Dickover had said to—buy Apex Crown!

Had Dickover been uttering a grim jest, thinking that the drummer and Bowen would rush to operate on his tip? Was Apex Crown worthless? And what was Alice Ferguson's interest in this stock, this stock which on the curb market was unsought and unbought?

Bob Bowen reached the Crothers Building. The elevator-man informed him that Miss Ferguson was a public stenographer. Two minutes later he was shaking hands with her.

She was as he remembered her—dark, lithe, rather grave-eyed just at present but with merriment latent in her face; and altogether feminine. Bowen would have been amazed had he realized how he himself was smiling as he seldom smiled.

"I've often heard Judge Lyman say that you were the squarest man he knew, Mr. Bowen," said the girl frankly, and smiled as Bowen stammered dissent. "Nonsense! That is why I called on you. I'm up against it and don't know what I should do."

"Neither do I," returned Bowen cheerfully. "What's the trouble?"

"Well, my father was a business man in Tonopah. He died three years ago, leaving me alone. After his death, it developed that he had sunk all his money in Apex Crown stock; this was in the early days, you know. The stock looked valuable, but there was no immediate demand for it. Then gradually it went down, and stayed down—"

"How much stock?" demanded Bowen.

"Ten thousand shares."

"Whew! Say, that was a shame! A shame—"

"No. My father had good judgment as a rule," was the grave rebuke, and Bowen fell silent. The girl pursued her subject coolly. "This morning a broker looked me up and made me an offer of ten cents a share for the stock. I refused him, and he went up to twenty cents—"

"He—what?" broke out Bowen. "Twenty cents?"

"Yes. I told him that I'd give him my answer to-morrow. The paper said that you were largely interested in low-grade ores, and I thought you might know something about this Apex Crown. If it's really worth anything, of course I don't want to throw it away—"

"Hold on a minute!" Bowen drew forth an afternoon paper which he had bought and had stuffed into his overcoat pocket without reading. "I don't know anything definite, but if anything has broken loose—ah! Here we are! Look at this!"

Excitedly he laid on the desk before her the opened paper. His finger pointed to an obscure paragraph—a list of curb stocks. The first stock was Apex Crown. Five thousand shares had changed hands, at a price of five cents, before the paper had gone to press.

"Now, see here, Miss Ferguson!" exclaimed Bowen. "Yesterday on the train, I met Mr. Dickover; the big plunger, you know! He said to buy Apex Crown. Naturally, I thought he was handing me a stinger by way of a joke. But here five thousand shares have changed hands to-day! Do you realize that for the last year or two nobody would have that stock at any figure? And here a broker comes to you with an offer for your block—"

They stared at each other, wordless. A touch of crimson crept into the girl's cheeks. Their eyes exchanged the same message of comprehension, of surmise.

"You think," said the girl suddenly, "that Dickover is taking control of Apex Crown?"

Bowen was silent for so long that the silence became painful.

"No," he returned at last. "No. I don't think he is. My cool judgment says

he is not. But what's judgment anyhow? You hang on to that stock, Miss Ferguson!"

She flushed a little, but her eyes dwelt on his. "I—I need the money it would bring at twenty cents," she faltered. "And yet—look here, Mr. Bowen! I suppose you're a very busy man and I have no right to ask it—"

"I'm not busy," said Bowen bitterly. "I'm on a vacation. I'll do anything you ask."

"I was wondering if—if you would let me indorse the stock over to you, and then you could act as you think best. Either sell it, or bargain for a higher figure—"

She paused, her grave eyes intent upon his lean-muscled face.

"If it's too much to ask of you," she went on, "please say so. I don't want to make you trouble or to impose on you, Mr. Bowen; you're been altogether too good in wasting this much of your time on me—"

"Wasting it? Great Jehu! I was just kicking myself for wasting so much time in not knowing you—I mean," he added confusedly, "for not having wasted a little time in the past—no, I don't mean that either. Well, if you're willing to trust me, I'll do my best in the matter! Where's the stock?"

"I have the certificates here," and the girl turned to the desk, but not quickly enough to hide the new tide of crimson that had welled into her face. It was not hard for any young lady to see that Bob Bowen of Tonopah was flustered. And Bob Bowen, as this young lady knew very well, had the reputation of never being flustered by anything or any one.

Why should she not blush, at such an unspoken compliment?

CHAPTER III.

A QUICK SALE.

ON the following morning Bob Bowen did not at once leap up and dress, nor did he disturb the morning paper. Instead, he lay quiet and frowned at the ceiling.

"No doubt at all about it," he reflected. "She never said a word about it, of course. She's not that kind. Just the same, it was there. It was in her eyes. Fear! She was afraid of something. That's why she gave me that stock in trust."

Instinct told him that he was right. Instinct had warned him from his first sight of Alice Ferguson that she was afraid of something. She had appealed to him for advice, yes; but fear had driven her further than she had first meant to go. Bowen had seen that hidden fear ere this, but not in the eye of a woman. It angered him.

What the devil was she afraid of? Rather—of whom? The answer was to Bowen quite obvious. Bowen had no use for brokers anyway. That hound of a broker who had visited her, had made some kind of threats, or had said something which put fear into her. Bowen swore to himself and looked at the time. It was seven thirty.

"I'll do it," he muttered, and opened his paper to the mining and stock page.

Instead of an obscure paragraph, he found that Apex Crown had leaped into prominence. The reasons, however, were entirely unknown. On the previous day some eight thousand shares had changed hands in San Francisco, and the price had closed at five cents^{bid}, none offered.

In Los Angeles, however, things were different. Southern California was the "boob" end of the State, where people speculated with penny stocks. Here a great deal of Apex Crown had been unloaded in past years, and yesterday had wakened the moribund stock. Here the price had closed at five and a half. Twelve thousand shares had been quietly picked up at two and three cents before the market had discovered the activity.

"Somebody's got agents at work, all right," said Bowen grimly. "And they offered the little girl as high as twenty! Wonder if Apex Crown broke into ruby ore? No, that's not likely over on those holdings. Something's going on secretly."

At that moment the telephone jingled.

"Yep, this is Bowen speaking. Who? Say it again. Oh, Dickover! Thought you were out of town—"

"I was," returned the squeaky voice of

the fat man. "Now I'm back. And I want to see you right now. I'm coming up to your room."

"Come ahead."

Bowen struggled into his clothes hurriedly, wondering why Dickover was seeking him. After that ten-thousand-share block? No, Dickover wasn't buying low-grade stuff.

Five minutes later the fat man entered the room, puffing a little and eying Bowen with angry suspicion. He refused to sit down.

"See here!" he broke out suddenly. "When I slipped you a tip to take a flier in Apex Crown I didn't mean for you to jump into the market with both feet! Confound you, Bowen, what's back of this? Why are you buying stock all over California?"

Bowen's eyes twinkled as he surveyed his visitor.

"Guess you're on the wrong track, Dickover," he drawled. "When you told me about Apex Crown, I figured you were handing me a bum steer. I haven't bought a share of the stuff. Straight!"

"What? You mean it?" Dickover said.

Bowen laughed easily. "I'll prove it. I haven't ten dollars to my name, and if the hotel wanted me to pay my bill I'd have to work it out in jail. I'd look fine going around buying stock, I would!"

There was no doubting his words. Dickover mopped his round face.

"Damn it!" he said. "Who's doing it?"

"How much is it worth to you to know? I can tell you before ten o'clock."

"You can? What d' you know about it?"

"A friend of mine holds a block of ten thousand shares. Was offered twenty cents for it yesterday. Asked my advice, then transferred the stock to me to be held or sold on my judgment."

"Ten thousand shares, eh?" Dickover's eyes narrowed. "Give you thirty."

"I'm not selling. Do you want to know who's buying, or don't you? How much for my information? I'll find out who wants this block—if you offer enough. I owe a bill here."

Dickover grunted. Then he emitted a falsetto chuckle.

"Five hundred. Waiting for you at ten o'clock."

"And your interest in the property?"

Dickover grunted, turned, and left the room.

Bob Bowen hastened down to breakfast. He had learned that the magnate was keenly interested in Apex Crown—wanted to buy it himself. Why? The only plausible explanation was that Apex Crown had broken into a rich lode, and from his knowledge of the place Bowen thought this unlikely.

At eight forty-five Bowen was striding toward the Crothers Building. He had plenty to puzzle him, but refused to let himself be puzzled. He needed that five hundred dollars and needed it very much.

He went straight to Miss Ferguson's office, and found her just arrived. She greeted him with patent surprise, but with a smile that left no doubt of his welcome.

"Has that broker been here yet?" demanded Bowen bluntly.

"That broker? Oh, no! He didn't say what time he'd be here for his answer."

"He didn't need to. I figure that nine o'clock will fetch him, and if you don't mind, I want to sit around on the chance."

The girl looked away from him a moment, looked at the window, frowningly.

"Of course I don't mind," she said at last. "Only—I don't want you to lose your temper with him—"

Bowen laughed frankly, a boyish laugh that was good to hear on his lips.

"I never had any temper," he said. "I'm the mildest little fellow you ever did see, Miss Ferguson! Honest. I'm a business man. Now, suppose you sit down and let me dictate a letter to Judge Lyman. I don't mean to send it, but I mean your broker friend to hear me dictating. When he comes in, nod and smile and tell him to wait."

The girl sat down before her machine and slipped a sheet of paper into the roll.

"All ready?" asked Bowen. "Then shoot!"

"MY DEAR JUDGE:

"I'm here in the big town and having the

time of my life. Them are the exact words. I yesterday met your erstwhile stenographer, Miss Ferguson, who has an office of her own and deserves it. I don't know of any one I'd sooner have met—"

Bowen paused, meeting the girl's eyes on his. "That's all right," he said hurriedly. "I'm writing the judge. Confidential letter. Go ahead!"

Smiling a little, the girl leaned forward. At that instant, however, the office door opened and a man appeared framed in the opening. Bowen gave him a casual glance. Miss Ferguson looked up and smiled—a bit frostily.

"I'll be through this letter in a moment," she said, "and shall be at liberty then. Just take a chair, please. Yes, Mr. Bowen?"

"Paragraph," said Bowen, now staring past her at the window. He was conscious that the stranger had taken a chair. "You got that property location all straight now?"

Miss Ferguson glanced up quickly, caught Bowen's vacant expression, and smothered the surprise in her eyes. "Yes," she said. "All ready."

Bowen proceeded with his dictation, apparently ignoring the listener.

"For these two holdings of mine—the Sunburst and the Golden Lode—I want more money than has been offered me as yet. They are, of course, low-grade ore, and if I can get rid of them at a reasonable figure, I shall do so at once.

"However, I have an appointment with Mr. Dickover at ten o'clock, and have good reason to believe—"

There came a sudden interruption—from the stranger.

"I beg your pardon," he said, stepping forward. "Of course I couldn't help overhearing your dictation, sir. May I ask if you are Mr. Robert Bowen of Tonopah?"

Bowen gave him a slow stare. "I am."

"By George! It's lucky I met you, then. I arrived from Tonopah myself a couple of days ago, and have been trying to connect with you. My name's Henderson. While at Tonopah I looked over your holdings, among others; and if you'd consider an offer on them—"

Bowen drew a cigar from his pocket, bit

off the end, and lighted it. He surveyed Henderson with indecision.

"I don't know you, Mr. Henderson," he observed coolly. "I don't want to sell those two properties, but I happen to need cash—in a hurry. My samples and assayers' reports are at the hotel—"

"I remember the properties very well," broke in Henderson. "I know you by reputation, and I know your ground by personal examination. Frankly, Mr. Bowen, I'm bucking the Dickover interests in a certain direction. If you'll give me an option—"

"Nothing doing!" snapped Bowen with finality. "Dickover is talking cold cash. Of course my ore is nothing wonderful—"

Henderson produced a check-book. "I'll give you a check for five thousand to cover both claims," he said quickly. "Not a cent more. Yes or no?"

"Now, I like your way of doing business!" said Bowen cordially. "That's what I call a man's way. Five thousand wins. Got any legal forms around, Miss Ferguson? Are you a notary?"

"I have and I am," said the girl quietly.

Twenty minutes later, with a witness called in from next door, Henderson was the owner of the Sunburst and Golden Lode claims. Bowen picked up the check for five thousand and handed it to Miss Ferguson.

"I don't know you, Henderson," he said quietly, "and I need cash badly. Further, I have an engagement in half an hour with Dickover and this must be settled one way or the other. So, Miss Ferguson, kindly step around the corner to the bank and cash this check for me. Good thing you deal with a local bank, Henderson."

"I'll go right with the young lady," spoke up Henderson. "I can facilitate the cashing of the check, perhaps."

"No," said Bowen, his gray eyes suddenly icy. "No. You stay here, Henderson. I want to have a little private conversation with you."

Henderson looked at him hard. Bowen's tone had not been nice; but then, Bowen seemed to be on the inside, and private conversation was an alluring bait.

"Well—" he hesitated.

"You'd better stay," said Bowen calmly. Then he rose and stepped outside the door as Miss Ferguson left. He closed the door again and spoke to the girl in a low voice.

"Cash that check, then run up to the Palace and wait for me, will you? Please!"

The girl nodded. Her eyes sought his with a mischievous gleam. "You won't hurt him?"

"Hurt him? Great Jehu! I should say not! Why, he's Dickover's confidential agent!"

CHAPTER IV.

BOWEN HOLDS THE ACE.

BOB BOWEN reentered the office, closed the door, set his chair against it, and sat down. Then he regarded the surprised and frowning "broker."

Mr. Henderson was a man to be seen once and remembered. He had a large nose, thin slits of black hawk-eyes, shaggy black brows, and a thin red line of mouth under a closed-clipped mustache. An able man, a forceful man, an unscrupulous man, this confidential agent of the magnate Dickover! Bowen, however, did not appear to be much impressed.

"You wonder why I'm sitting against the door, Mr. Henderson?" he drawled, chewing at his cigar. "For the obvious reason. To keep you from getting out."

Henderson stiffened. He was startled and taken aback. But Bowen continued his drawl without observing the agitation of the impeccably dressed agent.

"There's silver," he ruminated, "and silver. Bar-silver used to be forty-seven; now it's over ninety and still climbing. A low-grade ore that cost eight dollars a ton to produce a few months ago and gave back eight dollars, was no good. Now, however, it gives back eight dollars' profit and is a paying proposition. Those claims I sold you are that kind."

"Some day, and I guess it isn't very far off, folks are going to discover a chemical process that will take a zinc-silver ore and separate the zinc and the silver. An ore of that kind to-day, isn't worth a tinker's dam. If that chemical process is dis-

covered, it will be worth millions. And tucked up in my sleeve I've got a property just like that."

Henderson rose impressively.

"See here, Bowen," he observed, "I don't see what you're driving at, but if you mean that I can't leave this room—"

"You can leave it pretty quick," drawled Bowen. "But remember one thing! I'd like nothing better than to mix it with you! I'm just itching to hold you in a corner and pound off that big nose of yours; so don't start anything unless you want me to finish it."

"What do you mean talking to me like that?" snarled Henderson angrily. "A moment ago you sold me two claims, and now—"

"And now, having concluded business before pleasure, I'm talking. Miss Ferguson has transferred her block of Apex Crown to me."

Henderson's eyes narrowed. He started to speak, and bit back the words.

"That's right, don't get hasty," and Bowen grinned exasperatingly. "Took you by surprise, did it? Thought I didn't know you, eh? Well, I had sort of figured out that you might be you, and when you stepped in the door I knew it *was* you. Picking up low-grade silver properties, are you? I don't suppose that by any stretch of friendship you'd tell me why you're picking them up?"

Henderson's face went livid with anger.

"So you cut in ahead of me!" he rasped. "You got that little fool of a girl to hand over the stock—"

"Just one minute, Henderson!" Bowen lifted his hand. "I've got a terrible temper. It doesn't work very hard, not every day; but to hear names and epithets applied to honest women is something that sets it on a hair-trigger. Now, if I were you, Henderson, I'd just speak names and leave out the adjectives. Do you get me? Get me right off the jump?"

Henderson swallowed hard. It was plain to see that he was seething internally. But he knew men; that was his business. He looked into Bowen's gray eyes, and controlled himself.

"What do you want?" he said slowly,

his voice low and tense. "What are you driving at? Trying to force a bigger price for that stock out of me?"

"Nope," returned Bowen cheerfully. "But it isn't nice for a big man like you to come in here and try to threaten and browbeat a girl into giving away all she's got in the world. It's going to get you badly beaten up one of these days. However, now that you're dealing with me you might prove reasonable. How much will you give for that Apex Crown?"

"Thirty," growled Henderson.

"Buyin' for Dickover or yourself?" asked Bowen softly.

The agent uttered a lurid curse. Bowen rose and kicked away his chair, and opened the door.

"I thought so," he remarked cheerfully. "Well, I guess that check's cashed, so I'll mosey along. You needn't wait here for Miss Ferguson; she won't be back for quite a spell. And don't come down in my elevator; wait till I'm out of the way. And say—when you do come, shut the door after you, will you? So-long."

Bowen closed the door softly and strode off to the elevator. On the way down, he glanced at his watch. It was nine fifty.

"Lots of time," he thought. "I'll see Dickover, then meet the little lady."

At two minutes before the hour he inquired at the desk for Dickover, and was sent up to the latter's suite. He found Dickover declaiming to a private secretary, who admitted him and then retired discreetly. Bob Bowen dropped into a chair beside Dickover's table and accepted the cigar shoved at him.

"I like your cigars," he observed pleasantly. "The flavor is a little strong for my taste, but it's real tobacco. And then the label is pretty. Don't know when I've ever seen a prettier one—"

"Confound you!" snapped the fat man. "What d' you know?"

"Well, I'm thirty years old, pretty near, and you'd be surprised to find how much I've learned in the last decade of that time! Experience is—"

"Damn your experience!" exploded Dickover. "Do you know who's buying Apex Crown?"

"Of course. Don't you?"

For answer, Dickover seized a check from the table and held it out. It was for five hundred dollars.

"Thanks." Bowen stuffed it carelessly into his pocket. "Since seeing you this morning I've become fairly rich, and this will add a trifle to the pile. Your agent, Henderson, is the man after Apex Crown. Just offered thirty for the stock I hold."

The fat features of Dickover purpled with anger. But he suppressed his emotion, drew another cigar from his pocket, and lighted it.

"I rather suspected it, Bowen," he squeaked more calmly. "Of course you didn't sell him the stock?"

"No, I'll sell it to you if you want it."

"Huh! How much you want?"

"Five dollars a share."

Dickover abandoned the subject, after an apoplectic choke.

"Tell you what, Bowen; that tip of yours sent me up to Tonopah in a hurry. I looked up Henderson and fired him—fired him good and hard. The confounded crook! Now I need another man to take his place. A man I can trust, and a man who can be trusted. Ten thousand a year if the man makes good."

"Too bad you didn't look around at Tonopah," said Bowen innocently. "I know heaps of good men up that way. You should have gone to Judge Lyman or Tom Jenkins or some of those men and had 'em pick you out a nice responsible party for that job. They know everybody up there. Where do you get these cigars? Think I'll buy me a box."

Dickover smoked for a moment in silence. Then he laughed.

"I did snoop around up there, Bowen," he remarked at last. "What kind of a cuss are you? This morning you couldn't pay your hotel bill; and now you turn down a ten-thousand-dollar job!"

Bob Bowen sighed.

"Well, I do say that it's tempting. It's just that, Dickover. But now I've got responsibilities, such as that Apex Crown stock."

"Huh! Well, you know those mines you told me about—the Sunburst and the

Golden Lode? I looked 'em up in Tonopah. How much you want for 'em both?"

Bowen looked up, genuinely startled, "You want to *buy*?"

"Uhuh. If the price is right."

Bowen grinned. "Say, this is pretty rich! Listen here. An hour ago I was talking with Henderson, and talking soft. Somehow he got the notion that you were waiting here to buy those two claims off me. Savvy? He jumps into the breach with five thousand, which is now mine. The claims are his—"

Dickover purpled with indignation.

"You sold out to him; to that dirty yellow dog? What the jumping devils do you mean by it? Why didn't you sell to me—"

"Now, you just pour some ice-water over your scalp and cool off." Bowen's long, lean forefinger shot out at him. "How the jumping devils did I know you wanted to buy those claims? How did I know you wanted *any* low-grade stuff? In yesterday's paper you said you did *not* want it—you've never touched it before—"

Dickover waved his hand in helpless resignation.

"Oh, shut up, Bowen! Let me think, will you?"

For a space the two men smoked in silence. Dickover's fat features were tensed in frowning thought. To Bowen but one thing was patent: the magnate was now after low-grade silver ores. If he had not sold those two claims to Henderson in such a hurry! He had certainly been hoist with his own petard that time!

The thought made him chuckle. At the sound, Dickover began to speak slowly.

"Bowen, you say you want five dollars for that Apex Crown? Now, I'll speak frankly. Apex Crown will be worth five dollars—but not for a few years. For the past week my men have been secretly buying it in at two cents; and now I want that block of yours. That or nothing! I'll offer you par, one dollar, for that stock. If you refuse, I'll wash my hands of the whole mess and throw what I've bought on the market at the present price. Speak quick! If I take the mine, it goes up in value. If I don't take it, it's dead."

Bowen stared at his cigar.

He did not doubt that Dickover was in earnest. And suddenly a light broke upon him. It was vague and foggy, but it was light.

"See here!" He leaned forward earnestly. "I'll put this Apex Crown offer up to my friend—she's a lady. I'll go to my own room and call her up. In the mean time, you get Tonopah over long-distance. Anybody there you'd trust down to the ground?"

Dickover, eying him, nodded. "Judge Lyman is my local attorney there and is one of the best men I know in the world."

"That goes for me. Well, you want low-grade ores of big body and zinc-silver mixture; same as the Apex Crown and Sunburst and Golden Lode, eh? All right. Now, I've had an ace up my sleeve for some years. I've called it the Big Bony, and it's located down Rhyolite way. The ore runs zinc-silver strong, just like these others; only Big Bony has it in large quantities.

"Until about ten minutes ago, Dickover, that group of claims was not worth a cuss. To you, if my guess is right, it's now worth all the money I need in my business—say thirty thousand dollars. Judge Lyman knows all about it; has had assayers report on it, has visited the place himself with me, and owns a bunch of claims the other side of it. You call up Lyman before I come back."

"Yes?" prompted Dickover as Bowen paused. The magnate was keen-eyed, attentive.

"That ore, I believe, is what you want. It's really worth a big bunch more than thirty thousand; but I'm needing thirty thousand bad, right now! Will you buy it at that?"

Dickover reached for the desk telephone. "I'll talk to Lyman. His word is good for all the money I own."

"Good! I'll be back pretty soon."

Bob Bowen sought his own room and requested the office to page Miss Ferguson, who was somewhere about the parlors.

While waiting, he strode up and down savagely. Ten thousand dollars meant a fortune to this girl! If the offer was rejected, Dickover would carry out his word

and flood the market with Apex Crown. Sooner than make Henderson rich, he would smash Apex Crown and Henderson together.

The telephone jingled. Bowen caught up the receiver and heard Miss Ferguson's voice.

"This is Bob Bowen speaking, Miss Ferguson. I'll be down in a few minutes. Dickover has made me an offer of ten thousand for your stock, and I want your advice."

He heard the girl's voice catch. "Ten—ten thousand!"

"Yep. What I want to know is this: Do you want me to play safe on this stock or do you want me to handle it as I would my own? I warn you, there's a vast difference between the two! I can't warn you too seriously."

She did not reply at once. Bowen waited until waiting grew intolerable.

"Hello! Are you there, Miss Ferguson?"

"Yes. I—I was thinking. Please, Mr. Bowen, handle that stock entirely as if it were your own. I'll take the chance!"

"Good! Thank Heaven for your courage! I'll be down presently."

He had quite forgotten the five thousand which she bore for him.

Bowen returned to Dickover's rooms in no great haste; talking with Tonopah would take time as well as money. But when he entered, he found Dickover giving his private secretary some instructions. "And rush the papers here!" concluded the magnate. "With witnesses."

"Well?" Bowen dropped into a chair, as if casually. "Did you get Lyman yet?"

"The boy's making out the papers now. I'll buy. What did your lady friend say?"

Bowen felt a trickle of sweat run down his back. The game was won—almost!

"One thing at a time," he said, laughing. "Let's clean the Big Bony off the slate, then clean off the Apex Crown."

"Uhuh. One thing I meant to tell you, Bowen. Keep your eye peeled for Henderson! That fellow is bad medicine when he's crossed, and I judge by your manner that you have crossed him some this morning."

"I did, I hope," Bowen chuckled. The magnate grunted non-committally.

In ten minutes the ownership of the Big Bony group of claims was transferred from Bob Bowen to Dickover. The secretary and witnesses departed. Bowen pocketed the magnate's check for thirty thousand dollars.

"You lost another thirty on that deal," said Dickover complacently.

"I'll clean up fifty with the thirty I got," retorted Bowen. The other chuckled.

"I'll gamble that you do, at that! Well, about the Apex Crown—"

"We hang on to it."

The eyes of the two men met and held for a long moment.

"Then," Dickover's fist crashed down on the table, "you'll go smash! All or nothing is my motto. In three days you won't get three cents for that stock—and what's more, you never will get three cents for it!"

Bowen rose, his lips curving in a smile.

"Maybe. Well, I'm glad to 've met you. Hope we meet again."

"Same here." The two men shook hands. Dickover extended another cigar. "Smoke up on me after lunch, Bowen. Sorry you're going smash with that block of Apex Crown!"

"I'll be sorry if I do," said Bowen cryptically. "So-long!"

CHAPTER V.

BOWEN TAKES A PARTNER.

WITHOUT comment, Bowen took the flat packet Miss Ferguson handed him, dropped into the big plush chair beside her, and glanced at his watch.

"Eleven o'clock. Time to talk before lunch." He glanced around and found they were in no danger of eavesdroppers. Then, with leaping pulses, he told the girl of his conversations with Henderson and Dickover.

"And I refused Dickover's offer," he concluded bluntly, "and accepted his threat to smash the stock. He'll do it, too. By this time he's sent orders to his brokers to sell it, to smash the market flat."

The girl's eyes were steady on his.

"I'm content," she said curtly. "But please explain. You've some scheme?"

"You've said it. *Some* scheme! Do you mind if I smoke? My nerves are jumpy, and they'll be worse before they're better."

She made a gesture of impatient assent. He lighted Dickover's parting gift and for a space sat in silence, his face deeply lined in thought.

"I've got to make this clear to you," he said at last slowly. "You know anything about low-grade silver ores?"

"Very little."

"They're low-grade because they are mixed with lead or zinc, hold a small proportion of silver, and yield very small profit. The separation of the silver and zinc is difficult. A hyperstatic process has been invented, but if a chemical process could be found, it would be cheaper and better; besides, it would make a yield of zinc as well as of silver. And to-day both zinc and silver are soaring. You understand?"

She nodded quickly. "And—and you think such a process has been found?"

A gleam of admiration sprang into Bowen's gray eyes. For the first time, he smiled his likable, boyish smile.

"Great Jehu, there is nothing slow about you!" he breathed. "Yes. My guess—and mind this, it's no more than a guess—is that Dickover has advance information that this chemical process is now a verity. You see? It is probably workable on ores of a certain silver-zinc combination. I deduce this from the fact that the Apex Crown, the two holdings I sold Henderson, and the Big Bony I sold Dickover are of almost the same identical ore properties. Only such a discovery would get Dickover after low-grade ores."

She was leaning forward now, her eyes shining like twin stars.

"I see! Of course!" she exclaimed eagerly. "Henderson learned of this and at once went out on his own hook to secure all the mines and claims possible containing this grade of ore! And Dickover is here in San Francisco to buy everything in sight before news of the discovery has broken! Is that it?"

"You've said it. So far all's straight. Got any questions ready?"

"Heaps!" The girl laughed, then instantly grew grave. "Dickover knows that Henderson is a traitor and has been buying Apex Crown; yet Dickover is ready to buy our stock, make the Apex Crown a great success and enrich Henderson! Why?"

"I've doped it out; I struck the same snag myself—and others, too. Like this! If Dickover gets our block of stock, he controls that mine. He can let it lie useless for years, until Henderson has given up hope and sold out the stock he's been buying. And until that happens, Dickover lets the mine lie dead for five years or fifty! Savvy?"

"Sure, so far." Miss Ferguson frowned. "It's getting involved, though. The salient fact is the human equation—Dickover wants to smash Henderson first, then develop the mine!"

"Exactly. He knows that Henderson is loaded to the guards with the stock and is taking all that's offered."

"Then why does Dickover threaten to throw all *his* stock on the market? How would that smash anybody? Henderson could simply buy it up, control the mine, and develop it by means of the new chemical process!"

Bowen leaned back in his chair and puffed for a moment.

"Right there is where I had to make another quick guess, Miss Ferguson. But I think I'm right. I *know* I'm right! From what I remember of the Apex Crown affair, a fair quantity of stock was issued in the early days; close to half a million, I believe. We can verify the figures this afternoon. With Henderson and Dickover scrapping over a mere block of ten thousand shares, you see they have absorbed about all of that stock that was lying around loose. Call it about two hundred thousand shares or more to each of them.

"Now, when Dickover issued his Apex Crown ultimatum, I thought about what I'd do if I were in his place and with his power; and upon that it flashed over me exactly what *he* would do—the only thing he logically could do, upon such a threat as his! Remember that Dickover knows hu-

man nature and gambles on it; remember, also, he has agents or brokers in every large city in the country, and can strike contemporaneously at a moment's notice."

"All clear so far," said the girl quietly. "And your prophecy—"

"Is this: By to-day the stock is probably up to ten cents or more, and none offered. Dickover to-day issues orders to throw overboard the stock, beginning to-morrow morning; to throw overboard in such big blocks that Henderson will know where it's coming from. He'll hammer down the market, hammer it down until the stock is back to two cents or less.

"And what happens? Will Henderson buy everything in sight? No. He won't have the money or the nerve. He's a traitor, remember, and a traitor has a yellow spot somewhere. Henderson will think that the Apex Crown ore has proven unfit for going through the new chemical process; or he may think that Dickover has put some string on the property that makes the stock worthless; he may think any of a dozen things, and he *will*. He'll think all of 'em! Instead of finding himself grown rich by a sneaky, slick trick, he'll find Dickover fighting him—and his nerve will go."

"Possibly," agreed the girl, watching Bowen with fascinated eyes. "But it's a poor thing to bet on, isn't it? What's the rest of the prophecy?"

Bowen smiled grimly. "Quite logical. Henderson will find that he gave me five thousand of his cash when he's going to need it all. Before the market is quite smashed down to its original state, he's going to loosen up on a big bunch of his stock. He'll argue that at the right moment. When Dickover begins to buy in again, he, too, can step forward and get back his own—with some of Dickover's to boot; enough to give him control."

"And," cried the girl quickly, "Dickover knows that he'll think so! With all his organization and power, Dickover will step in first! Before Henderson can do it, Dickover has done it. Is that the idea?"

"Exactly." Bowen puffed for a moment; that cigar was too good to be allowed to die. "Exactly. If Henderson does have the nerve to stick, Dickover will beat him

anyhow. Now do you see what the game of Dickover is?"

"I see. And I think I agree with you—Henderson will lack nerve. He'll begin to unload his stock at four cents, will unload more at three, and throw off all of it at two to break even. Then, when he's cleaned out of the stock, Dickover will rob the whole market!"

"Bully for you!" exclaimed Bowen eagerly. "I knew you'd understand!"

"Thank you." She smiled, a trifle wanly. He saw that the strain of understanding had been telling upon her. After all, that block of stock was hers! "But I don't understand yet why you refused Dickover's offer for my stock; and I don't understand why you sold him a mine at half its value!"

"I sold him that mine because I was going to need the money right after lunch—and need it badly." Bowen rose. "As for why I refused his offer, let that go until we have lunch. I've licked Henderson and Dickover this morning, which is going some; now I must add you to the list—and I need a stimulant before opening fire."

The girl made no demur. They sought the dining-room together; Bowen, no less than Alice Ferguson, was keyed up to a high tension by the big game, and the biggest game was still ahead of him—the hardest work.

Midway through luncheon, Bowen was sought by special messenger and was handed a folded message. He put it in his pocket without reading, and smiled across the table.

"Information for which I phoned. I don't think much of brokers as a class, but I do know of one man in the game whom I'd trust—Gus Saunders. Ever hear of him?"

The girl shook her head. Bowen switched the subject. He took pains to impress upon Miss Ferguson that he was not the magnate she had thought him. He felt impelled to stand upon a frankly honest footing with this level-eyed girl; he could do nothing else.

"And it was meeting Dickover on the train and here at the hotel," she said, laughter twinkling in her eyes, "that started you on this high finance wave?"

Good gracious! If I'd known that when you called up about the stock—"

"Well? What would you have said?"

"Just what I did say!" she finished with a laugh. "Now here comes our coffee. Can't you possibly unburden your mind yet? I can't stand this suspense a moment longer!"

Bowen grinned and slipped the waiter a gold piece. They were in a corner of the big dining-room, and to themselves.

"Here, my friend! Keep everybody away from us and don't bother us until I call you!" The waiter bobbed and departed, and Bowen drew a sigh of relief. "Now! We'll wade in."

He produced the packet of notes, and Dickover's check for thirty thousand, and laid them on the table before him. Then he drew forth the message that had been brought him.

"Miss Ferguson, my proposition is simply this: That we go into partnership on the Apex Crown. This message is from Gus Saunders. The Apex Crown issued five hundred thousand shares, and the original holders unloaded everything about a year ago, so that the entire issue is on the market—or is divided between Henderson and Dickover. We've already figured out that by to-morrow most of that stock will be back on the market temporarily."

"Until Dickover can swallow it at a gulp," she added.

"Sure. That mine is highly valuable property—if the chemical process has really been discovered. That's what I'm gambling on; I'm certain that in about another fortnight the mining world will get the news. So, then, let's get busy! I propose that you and I step in at the psychological moment, when Dickover has scared Henderson into unloading; that we make a bold strike and gobble about three hundred thousand shares of that stock at the lowest figure. In short, that we grab the Apex Crown for ourselves! Are you game?"

He was leaning forward, his lean face tensed, his gray eyes holding her gaze.

For a moment she did not respond. When she did answer, her words surprised him.

"Mr. Bowen, I—I don't see why you make this proposition to me. You have

enough money there on the table to handle the affair yourself. I cannot put any money into it."

"What! Then you don't want to go into it? You have no faith in my theories?"

"Please don't misunderstand me!" she replied quickly. "I've every faith in you. But I cannot enter upon a partnership where I can give nothing. Because I'm a girl, you're generous to me—and I don't want people to be generous; I can fight my own battles—"

From Bowen broke a sudden ejaculation.

"Great Jehu! Of all the nonsense I ever heard, this is the worst!"

"Well! Isn't it true?"

"No!" he exclaimed savagely. "It is not true! Not as you think. See here, don't you like the scheme? Don't you realize that it's a big thing if successful?"

"Of course I do. But—if I were not a woman, you'd not offer this partnership."

It was Bowen's turn to take the aggressive; he did it with a vim and earnestness that brought the color flooding into her cheeks.

"You're right. I wouldn't! It's because you *are* a woman that I want you for partner in this business; I need you! Fighting for myself, I'd be apt to do any fool trick. But with your interests hanging on mine, fighting for you as well as for myself, saddled with the responsibility of your trust and your future—why, I'd fight like *hell*! Excuse me. I didn't mean that profanely, but literally.

"I tell you frankly, Miss Ferguson, you'd be an inspiration to any man! I don't talk like this to every woman. I've never *felt* like this before in my life. I never met you before, that's the reason! When I say I need you for a partner, I mean just that.

"Get angry if you want to; I can't help it. This isn't a question of what money you can put in. You can put in your block of stock, for that matter; the rest is personality, outbalancing all the money on earth! You can help me with your advice, your character. I'm not offering you charity, God knows!

"Now, it's up to you—my cards are on the table. Say no, and I'll give you ten

thousand for your stock. Say yes, and we'll go into the game as fighting partners. Which is it?"

In his appeal was force and something better than force—earnestness.

Alice Ferguson recognized it. She worked for her living, and had learned to know something of what might lie beneath the words of a man. She saw that Bowen's speech might be crude and a bit too frank; but she saw that he meant it. She read down to the good honest soul of the man from Tonopah, and found honesty there. She realized that he did indeed need her; that it would be a coward's part to fail him. And he was a man to trust.

"Yes," she said, her eyes grave.

Bowen relaxed suddenly, drew a long breath like a sigh. He had been tremendously keyed up to that moment.

"Then let's go," he said, rising. "Let's go see Gus Saunders."

CHAPTER VI.

POTENTIAL MILLIONAIRES.

ONCE they were settled in a taxicab, Bowen produced the five thousand in notes, removed the rubber-bands from the package, and counted out twenty fifties.

"Here," He handed the girl ten of the yellow-backs. "I need expense money and so do you. Five hundred apiece will do."

"But—"

"No time to be squeamish! We're partners. This is an advance on the profits."

Miss Ferguson offered no further objection.

They found Gus Saunders awaiting them in his private office. A conservative broker, this, albeit a young man; by inheritance the junior head of a big firm; clean-cut in every line, and a good sportsman. Bowen had frequently met him at Tonopah.

"Miss Ferguson, allow me to introduce Mr. Saunders. Miss Ferguson is my partner at present, Gus, in a deal we've got on hand; looks like a big one, and we need your help."

"That's my business," and the broker smiled.

"There's a curb stock by the name of—"

"Hold on!" Saunders flung up his hands. "Don't talk curb stock to me. Don't touch the stuff, and you ought to know it!"

"Shut up till I get through!" snapped Bowen, and grinned. "You're refusing no good business that comes along; and I'm paying you any commission on this job that you care to name. I'll trust your end of it, Gus—and there's no one else I can trust."

"Well," conceded the other, "let's hear about it."

"Neither Miss Ferguson nor I are very wise to the brokerage game," pursued Bowen, "but we've doped out a theory and a course of action, and if it's O. K.'d by you, and if it is feasible, then you can shoot ahead. To-morrow there is going to be some whopping big activity in Apex Crown, both here and at Los Angeles."

"Everybody is going to unload that stuff; the market is to be crammed down to two cents or under—probably under. At two cents, the man who's behind the move figures on jumping in and getting control of the mine. Savvy? All right."

"Now, we want you to step in ahead of him. When that stock touches three cents, step softly and begin to buy. At two cents grab it with both hands. Keep on grabbing until the price goes up again to ten—"

"Just one minute, please!" broke in Miss Ferguson excitedly. "If this activity does not begin until to-morrow, why can't we begin to-day? Every share we get is going to count for control of the mine, Mr. Bowen. If we can get some to-day, each of our friends will think the other man is buying it."

"Good," assented Bowen crisply. "Now, Gus, will you handle it for us? You have plenty of agents, and can pull the strings at the right moment without trouble."

The broker chuckled:—"This is the first time I ever manipulated curb stocks, Bob! But we'll tackle it. You don't want to buy two-cent stocks on a margin, I suppose?"

Bowen emitted a sarcastic grunt, and drew forth his cash and checks.

"Here are two checks Dickover handed me this morning," and he was not above feeling an inner satisfaction at the broker's

quickly concealed surprise, "and some cash. An even thirty-four thousand, five hundred in all. Will that turn the deal?"

"What do you folks think you're buying—Amalgamated Motors? This ought to buy the Apex Crown outright—half of it ought to buy all the shares on the market!"

"Half of it won't," said Bowen grimly. "And you take out your commission before the money evaporates, because we haven't any more! But you get us control of that mine, and as much more as the cash will let you buy."

"All right. Let's sign up the orders. Do you want to stick around here and get my reports as they come in?"

"Not me," said Bowen emphatically. "Bob Bowen does not intend to become a hanger-on and a parasite, with his nerves snapping and bursting all to h—all to thunder! You call me up at the Palace when I'm broke or when the deal is over."

Ten minutes later Bowen and Miss Ferguson returned to the street.

"Please don't call a taxi!" The girl laughed. "It's such—such an awful waste of money—and I'd much sooner walk!"

"We'll be millionaires on this deal; we should worry! However, I'm with you. Let's walk. Where next?"

"Where? Why, I'll have to get back to the office—"

"The office? And you a potential millionaire?"

She laughed, and not nervously this time. Bowen's air was infectious.

"I think I'll hang on to that office, Mr. Bowen! Anyway, I've promised to turn out some work by to-night."

They walked along in silence until they reached the Crothers Building. At the entrance the girl paused and turned to Bowen.

"You haven't told me what you expect to do with that mine—when we get it!"

"Do! Why, what did you suppose? Work it by the new chemical process, of course! Or else sell it outright; once the process is on the market, a mine like the Apex Crown will be a bargain at a million! Dickover knows. He said the stock would be worth five dollars a share—when he got ready to make it worth that!"

"Very well." Miss Ferguson put out her

hand. "I'll say good-by for this time and get back to work. You'll let me know?"

"You bet I will!" exclaimed Bowen heartily, seeking a pretext for detaining her, but finding none.

He strode along to the Palace with his head in the clouds. Come to think of it, he had earned an afternoon of loafing!

All the previous day he had been watching his plans go from bad to worse, despite the puff he had received in the paper. But at nine o'clock this morning things had begun to move, and they had continued to move with lightning rapidity. His brain had been on the jump keeping one step ahead. For five hours he had been under a growing mental strain which had told tenfold upon his iron-bound physical self.

In five hours he had taken in thirty-five thousand, five hundred dollars, most of it from a man whom he could never have approached in an ordinary way. The whole thing had started with his meeting on the limited with Dickover and the drummer. And now the majority of that money had been laid out on a gamble which might—might—return millions! If he could grab enough of Henderson's stock and Dickover's stock combined, at the moment both men had unloaded; if he could step in ahead of Dickover and at the proper moment get control—

"I've got to stop thinking about this thing," he muttered fiercely. "It's got my brain turning handsprings. There's nothing for me to do, anyhow! Everything is in the hands of Gus Saunders now. I need a bracer, and I'm going to get it. Then I'll buy some magazines and loaf a while."

Bowen was the type of man who takes a drink only when he really needs it, and does not need it often. Now he needed it, and straightway got it. Then he visited a few shops. Having bought some clothes and certain other things of which he stood in need, he returned to the hotel, deposited most of his five hundred in the hotel safe, and settled down in the lobby over some magazines.

For half an hour he read and let his jangled nerves relax. He refused utterly to look up Apex Crown in the papers.

Suddenly he realized that his own name

was being called by an evanescent page with a tray. "Mr. Bow-en! Mr. Bow-en!" Rising, Bowen attracted the attention of the buttoned autocrat and was handed a card. It read:

"Oliver Hazard Perry Cheadle, Mineralogist."

"The gentleman's at the desk? Send him up to my room in five minutes."

Bowen betook himself to the elevator. Who was Oliver Hazard Perry Cheadle? The name was totally unknown to him. Arriving at his room, he sought the telephone directory, but found no such name listed.

Mr. O. H. P. Cheadle proved to be a plump, chalky-faced little man with the bland countenance of a cherub. His eyelids blinked behind thick spectacles. His linen was dirty to a degree. He spoke with a slow hesitance in the selection of words. He shook hands with a limp, flaccid grip.

"Mr. Bowen, may I request—er—a few moments of your—er—time? You are a very busy man, I know, but I believe that I have a—er—a proposition to interest you. I read of your being here in—er—the paper—"

"Sit down and rest your heels," said Bowen cordially, laughing to himself.

So here was another result of his publicity! It was something to be a public character, to be classed with the great Dickover!

Mr. Oliver Hazard Perry Cheadle, like a solemn little owl, went directly to business. He had just come to town from Arizona. He had a mine to sell. He had seen by the paper that Bob Bowen, of Tonopah, was heavily interested in low-grade silver properties. His holdings were not silver, but were copper-zinc, and he was so badly in need of ready money, *et cetera*.

Bowen heard him out. After all, why not have a crack at everything that offered? Zinc-copper ore was not unattractive in prospect.

"Besides, I've nothing to keep me busy," he thought. And said aloud, "Let's see the samples."

Mr. Cheadle was apologetic. The samples and assayer's report were all at his own lodgings. He had not ventured to think

that Mr. Bowen—er—would be interested offhand, and—

"Well, let's go have a look," said Bowen, rising. The humility of Mr. Cheadle was slightly annoying. "Where are you stopping? Oh, don't protest, man; I'm free for the day."

It appeared that Mr. Cheadle was stopping at a rooming-house just off Sutter Street. Together the two men descended to the street, where the magnate hailed a taxicab. Bob Bowen, of Tonopah, believed in enjoying affluence while he had it.

The taxi sped out Sutter, crossed Van Ness, and a few blocks farther on veered to the left and halted before one of the extremely old-fashioned residences, high off the sidewalk, which in this section of the city had escaped the fire.

Being a stranger to San Francisco, Bob Bowen did not realize that they had entered upon what in these latter days had become the Japanese quarter; nor, had he known, would the fact have meant anything to him. He felt a mingled repulsion and interest in Oliver Hazard Perry Cheadle. It was entirely reasonable that an impecunious Haysamper would have sought just such a dingy, antiquated rooming-house as this.

And Bowen reasoned why not pass the good work along? He himself had come to town practically broke; a clap on the back from Dickover had put him on the path to fortune. Why not lend the same halo to Oliver Hazard Perry Cheadle?

Thus thinking, with a righteous glow of generosity warming the cockles of his heart, Bob Bowen allowed himself to be ushered into a dark hallway. To Bowen's surprise, the hallway seemed roofed by stars and specks of light; he was only dimly conscious of a crushing blow on the head that sent him reeling and staggering into utter darkness.

CHAPTER VII.

A PAIR OF PROFITEERS.

WHEN a man is hit on the back of the head, hard enough to knock him out without any error, it hurts.

Bob Bowen discovered this fact with a

vengeance. He had never before been hit on the head with malice prepense; and when he came to himself he was slow in realizing what had happened, and why. He was conscious of a light, and also of a keenly stabbing headache. There seemed to be a lump of some consequence behind his right ear.

The light presently made itself clear as coming from a gas-jet against the wall. Bowen was quite uncertain about his perspective, but finally decided that he was lying on the floor. Pain in his wrists and ankles told him that, incredible though it seemed, his wrists and ankles were lashed together too tightly for comfort.

"Guess I'm not supposed to be comfortable," he murmured, with the ghost of a smile.

The murmur produced an effect.

Into the area of gaslight above Bowen appeared a face. It was a plump but chalky face, the face of Oliver Hazard Perry Cheadle. Gone were the thick spectacles and the bland, cherubic expression. In the stead of them there was a leering grin that quite transfigured the erstwhile mineralogist from Arizona.

"Dropped you!" said Mr. Cheadle, with a complete absence of hesitation or culture. "You poor fish! Dropped you like a innocent babe, I did! Mebbe Henderson won't grin when he lamps that mug of yours. But why you don't carry more cash in your pocket, I don't see—"

The voice died away, and the livid face. Bowen felt unconsciousness swirling upon him; but before his senses lapsed, he realized that things are seldom what they seem, and that in his first half-amused judgment of Mr. Cheadle he had made a grievous error. Then he fell asleep, entirely satisfied on that point.

When he wakened again he saw through half-closed lids that now it was broad daylight. Hearing the voices of two men in the room, and recognizing both voices, Bowen did not open his eyes fully. Instead, he shut them again and kept them shut for a time.

His head was still hurting, but not with that first keen pain; it was now the dulled, deadened hurt of an old bruise. It no

longer dominated him. He had wakened alert, with full memory of what had passed; he was, in short, pretty much himself, except for the cold anger that possessed him. A burning thirst consumed him, but anger dominated it.

And when Bob Bowen was angry to the bottom of his soul, he was not the man to pause over half-way measures, or to ask himself what might happen. He knew what would happen if he got the chance!

"He ain't wise to the world yet," said the voice of Cheadle. "Want to stir him up?"

"No," the more biting tones of Henderson made response. "No time for that now. Let it wait until to-night."

"Well, what then?" Cheadle was evidently impatient. "I'm tired o' being a door-mat, Henderson. I want to know how the big stroke is comin', and why; and about this poor boob—what's going to happen to him and us. No more obeying orders till I know why, boss."

The ugly note in that voice was manifest even to Bowen. Henderson replied quickly.

"Him? Oh, leave him till to-night. I'm not going to hurt him any more; just let him know he mustn't butt into *my* games after this. We'll scatter some whisky on his clothes and take him over to the Mission and leave him. He isn't the sort of fool who spills all he knows to the police; he's too wise to buy chips in a stacked game! He'll take his lesson."

"And now come along and we'll sit in at the big game."

Footsteps and silence. Then the two voices again, less clear this time, but quite intelligible, and a scrape of chairs.

Bowen opened his eyes. He was lying on the floor of a disordered bedroom, lighted by a dingy window. Three feet from him a curtain closed an old-style double doorway; the doors were not pulled to, and in the other room were Henderson and Cheadle. The former telephoned to some unknown "Charley," and gave orders to be kept in touch with every move of Apex Crown. Then he and Cheadle fell into conversation, earnest and low-voiced.

Though he caught only scraps of that conversation, Bowen listened in astounded

incredulity. Before him the two speakers unfolded a deeper and craftier knavery than he had ever dreamed; schooled as he was in the tricky mining game, the former agent of Dickover was now springing something unrivaled in his experience for audacity and duplicity! From the muttered voices Bowen was enabled to piece together the following scheme of things:

Cheadle was the superintendent in charge of the Apex Crown development.

Two months previously, Dickover had received private information that a chemical process for treating zinc-silver ore economically was being perfected. He had at once sent Henderson on a private trip to pick up low-grade silver properties and form a gigantic combination; for as soon as news of the chemical process reached the market, low-grade silver would soar. Henderson had found from Cheadle that the Apex Crown was petering out. The vein had been worked to death, and there was no promise of picking up anything beyond. Whereupon Henderson had conceived a plan amazingly bold and clever, Cheadle being his accessory and abettor.

Henderson had sent Dickover a glowing report on the Apex Crown. Cheadle had sent his stockholders news that a twenty-five-foot vein was opening up. Therefore Dickover had issued orders to add Apex Crown to his low-grade holdings. Henderson had quietly bought for himself.

"So we now own some two hundred thousand shares," went on the voice of Henderson. Bowen drank in every word. He felt a cold sweat trickling down his spine as he realized that Apex Crown was worthless.

"Sure," rejoined Cheadle. "But I don't get this highbrow play with Dickover! Why bust things off with him?"

"To make him hate me." Henderson laughed silkily. "The day before Dickover came to town, I went to this Ferguson girl, made her a big offer for her stock, and then made her mad with some bullying. I figured she'd go to Dickover or some of his brokers for advice. Instead, she went to this boob, Bowen. You see? Bowen did the rest. He tipped off Dickover that I was crooked; Dickover fired me, hating me

like hell! Now, Apex Crown was at nine and a half this morning—hello! There's a report."

The telephone rang.

"Sell?" rasped Henderson, a fighting edge to his voice. "Sell? You sell when I tell you to, and not before! No! You'll not sell—till I give the order!"

He slammed up the receiver and emitted an oath.

"Charley says the stock is getting shot all to pieces! Some one is unloading in chunks from one to ten thousand—it's down to seven here, and four at Los Angeles. That's Dickover's work. He's cramming the market down—"

"What!" From Cheadle broke a startled cry. "Then he's discovered—"

"Shut up!" snarled Henderson. "He's discovered nothing, I tell you! He's doing the very thing I'd expected him to do. Don't you suppose I know Dickover from start to finish? D'you think I've been his confidential agent without knowing him like a book?"

"Then why the hell is he unloading?" growled Cheadle.

"To bust me. He thinks I'm trying to get hold of Apex Crown. He's doing the very thing I knew he would do—I knew it from the day I met you first and got your report of the petering vein! He figures that because I double-crossed him I've got a yellow streak. He thinks that I want Apex Crown because I know about that chemical process. And what does he do? He—"

Cheadle broke in with a coarse laugh. "Then he still thinks the ol' mine is worth hanging on to?"

"Of course. You and I are the only men who know it isn't worth a damn. Dickover hates me now, hates me bad enough to ruin himself to get my pelt. He's trying to smash Apex Crown as flat as a pancake, and he'll do it before noon to-day! He figures that I'll get scared. He's dead sure that I've got a yellow streak. He's gambling that when Apex Crown gets away down, I'll grow scared and unload to save something from the wreck. See?"

"Uhuh! But what *will* you do? What's your game? How the devil do we make a killing out of this?"

"We bought our stock at two to five cents, didn't we?" Henderson laughed. "About noon Apex Crown will be flat. When it is, then I dump over a hundred thousand shares in small lots. Dickover thinks I've fully unloaded; he steps in to grab the stock. I help him by grabbing back my hundred thousand shares, and the price goes up. Worse than that, it skyrockets! When it gets to a dollar, which is about the limit, we'll unload for good. We'll get rid of the whole thing at between a dollar and fifty—and clean up a hundred thousand odd dollars!"

"Whew!" Cheadle's whistle of admiration changed and died suddenly. "But say! Ain't that stock juggling illegal? Ain't the gov'ment going to investigate?"

"Let 'em!" Henderson laughed scornfully. "If they can ever prove anything on Dickover or me, either, let 'em! Think we are fools? With that hundred thousand, and the low-grade properties I've already got, I'll be fixed for life when news of that chemical process gets into print! And I'll see that it does get into print before many more days."

Again the telephone jingled.

"Some boob is buying," snarled Henderson, reporting to his partner in rascality. "But the price is going down just the same. Four here and two and a half in Los Angeles."

The voices dropped beyond the hearing of Bowen. But he had heard enough. The irony of the situation was that Henderson did not in the least realize that his clever scheme was utterly ruining the man he hated, Bob Bowen, of Tonopah!

"And he sha'n't know it if I can help it," grimly reflected Bowen.

He fought down the panic that gripped him. He felt no satisfaction at having correctly guessed Dickover's plan of campaign. He felt no delight at having correctly guessed that a chemical process *had* been perfected. All this was lost in the thought that he had ruined Alice Ferguson. For himself he did not greatly care. He had been broke before, and would be broke again!

But the thought of the girl who had believed in him, hurt and rankled. It must

now be getting on toward noon, he concluded. By this time Gus Saunders, through scattered agents, was buying Apex Crown here and in Los Angeles; buying it for Bowen and Ferguson! Dickover was grimly hammering down the stock. Saunders's buying would be too carefully handled to send it shooting up in a hurry. And when Saunders got all through, according to the orders the partners had given him, they would own a mine that was absolutely worthless!

"As soon as we've got in the clear"—Henderson's chuckling tone came through the muffling curtain with new clearness—"we'll spring the news about the mine having petered out completely. Then maybe she won't smash! I tell you what, Cheadle! This manipulation is going to be investigated, all right; you run out and bring up some lunch, will you? While you're gone, locate somebody you can trust, and have him spread the news that Apex Crown has petered out. Have it done at exactly two o'clock.

"Dickover will get the wires hot in five minutes, and you can arrange for him to discover the truth at Tonopah. Wire somebody there that the mine's busted and you are in Frisco."

"What's the matter with your own men doing all this?" growled Cheadle suspiciously.

"I'm doing the operating; I'll be the first man under investigation. Can't afford to take the risk, even to put a hole in Dickover's bank-account, blast him! But you can do it. Put on those glasses and that line of talk you can assume, and you'll get by. Don't you know any one you can trust?"

There was a moment of silence, then a chair was scraped back.

"I know a guy," returned Cheadle. "I guess it can be done safe enough. Two o'clock, eh?"

Cheadle came through the curtained doorway and, without glancing at the prostrate Bowen, opened a wall-cabinet, took out his thick spectacles, and donned them. Then, as he took a step, he stumbled over Bowen's feet. Catching at the wall to save himself from falling, he dislodged the wall-

cabinet and sent a shower of toilet articles over the floor.

Mr. Oliver Hazard Perry Cheadle cursed heartily and fluently. He even kicked the man from Tonopah in the ribs, but Bowen merely grunted and kept his eyes closed. Then Cheadle passed back into the next room.

"Two o'clock, eh?" he repeated surlily. "Sure we'll be clear by then?"

"Leave that part of it to me," said Henderson sharply. "We'll be clear. But be sure to have the trick turned at two sharp! That'll give Dickover plenty of time to find the report is true, and to unload. I want to see him get a crimp, the big toad!"

"Then at two she busts," said Cheadle.

"And hurry back here with the lunch. I'm getting hungry."

Cheadle grunted and a door slammed behind him.

Bowen lay motionless, his head twisted so that he could idly survey the wreckage caused by Cheadle's stumble. This final move of Henderson's had removed his last hope. At three o'clock that afternoon Apex Crown would be known to all men as worthless—and the Apex Crown would be the property of Bob Bowen, of Tonopah!

But it was Alice Ferguson that Bowen was chiefly thinking. Whose fault but his that her little patrimony would be wiped out?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SMASH OF APEX CROWN.

SLOWLY anger uprose again in Bowen's soul. After all, the disaster that was upon him and upon Alice Ferguson was not primarily his own fault! It was due to the machinations, the fraud and trickery of Henderson.

"We're simply meshed in the net he has woven," thought Bowen. "And there's no way out! Great Jehu, if I could only get my hands free for five minutes!"

But he could not, and gave up the instinctive effort. His hands and feet were numb and swollen by reason of the tight lashings. The thirst that racked him was unbearable. He kept silent, however. Ask

Henderson for a drink? Beg Henderson for mercy? Not yet!

Time passed.

Through the curtain Bowen could hear Henderson answering the telephone, but not in any manner to supply further information. He knew that the man was smoking, could smell the tobacco: it wakened the craving within him and intensified his thirst. Once Charley called up, and presumably demanded permission to sell, for Henderson answered savagely:

"I told you once before that I'd give orders! Now shut up. You sell when I tell you to sell, and not before. Get that? I'm giving the orders in this deal, and not you! You tell me when that stock climbs to ninety—what? Never mind your predictions; I know what's doing! When it touches ninety, call me, that's all. But don't you dare sell until I give you the word!"

Again the scratch of a match, followed by silence. Bowen's eyes were caught by a metallic glint on the threadbare carpet, two feet from his head—just about opposite his elbow. He stared at it for a moment without recognition. Then suddenly his gray eyes widened a little.

The object had been spilled with the other things from the wall-cabinet. It was rusty and had evidently been long discarded, forgotten. It was the slender steel blade of a safety-razor!

"Great Jehu!" muttered Bowen. "Great Jehu! If I only could!"

He was lying half on one side, half on his arms, which were bound behind his back. Carefully he moved his numbed limbs, moved his aching body. Inch by inch he moved it, sidling up and along until he judged that his lashed hands were about level with the bit of rusted steel. Gropingly he felt for it. A moment later his searching fingers came in contact with the razor-blade.

Bowen relaxed, a deep breath of achievement swelling his chest. He lay quiet, half fearing lest his movements had been heard by Henderson. But no sign came from the other room.

As the possibilities unfolded, a desperate inspiration flashed upon Bowen's brain.

After all, there was still a chance, more than a chance, of retrieving the disaster! That bit of rusted steel placed hope between his hands! How late it was, he could not tell, but it must be long past noon, although Cheadle had not yet returned with the luncheon. Bowen smiled at the thought. If he could but free his feet and wrists! If he could but down those two scoundrels! If he could but telephone to Gus Saunders before two o'clock! Then the market for Apex Crown would be at its height, and Saunders could unload before the crash!

Bowen had dreamed of millions, when he believed the mine to be good. Now that it was a question of at best getting out from under, there was still hope of cleaning up a tidy fortune. But he would have to phone Gus Saunders before two o'clock!

Cautiously holding the edged blade in his almost senseless fingers, Bob Bowen fumbled with it for the cord that bound his wrists behind him. He could not make the keen blade reach. Just as he realized this, just as he realized that the job was not going to be so easy as it had seemed, he heard Cheadle enter the adjoining room.

"Done it, Henderson!" Cheadle apparently set down a basket, for there was a rattle of dishes. "There's lunch."

"You fixed it all right? Sure it's safe?" demanded the eager voice of Henderson.

"Safe as shootin', pardner! At two o'clock the storm busts, and Lord help us if we ain't somewheres else!"

"Leave that to me. What's this you got to drink—milk! You're a nice one, you are! Bringing me milk to drink—"

"It's all you get. I mean that you shall keep a clear head to-day, pardner. No booze in yours until we've cashed in! Now lay out the grub. Have you looked at *him* in there? Has he waked up yet?"

"Don't know and don't care," grunted Henderson.

Cheadle came striding through the doorway. Forewarned, Bowen closed his hand over the bit of rusty steel in his palm. He looked up at Cheadle, who bent over and examined his bonds.

"Don't I get something to eat?" hoarsely demanded Bowen. "Give me a drink at least—"

"You shut up." Cheadle bestowed upon him a gentle kick. "You're blamed lucky to get off at all!"

Cheadle strode back to his partner in crime. Henderson began retailing reports that had come over the phone, but now Bowen paid no heed to the mumble of voices.

Working frantically, Bowen strove to reach his wrist-cords with the edged steel. At first he found it practically impossible. Twice the blade slipped in his numbed fingers and struck into his flesh. Fearful lest he sever a wrist-artery, he took more caution.

At length he got a grip that held upon the thin steel, and to his keen joy felt the tip of the blade touch a cord. Slowly it bit through. A slight tug told him that the strand had parted. Dropping the blade, he worked his arms until the severed cord loosened. Scarce sensible of the motion, scarce able to make his brain control the congested members, Bowen drew his arms from beneath him.

He was free—but for the moment, helpless. He could not move his hands; they were swollen and purpled, quite without feeling.

For a while he lay, content to slowly chafe the life back into his fingers. With an effort he sat up, found the razor-blade where he had dropped it, and freed his ankles. Still he could do no more than strive to bring the banished blood back into hands and feet. Motion intensified his thirst, which seemed burning the throat out of him! But he made no sound.

Slowly strength and control came back to his hands. He clenched them with a grim smile; they were pretty good hands after all—quite equal to the work that lay ahead! And suddenly, as he cautiously tried to gain his feet without noise, he heard a chair scraped back in the adjoining room.

"Confound that grapefruit!" It was Henderson who spoke, with irritation. "I'm going across the hall to the toilet and wash up. Call me if Charley rings up."

"Sure," responded Cheadle.

The door slammed after Henderson. The next instant Bowen heard the footsteps of Cheadle crossing the floor—toward him.

Catlike, the man from Tonopah came to his feet, looked swiftly around for a weapon. He could not trust his fists—yet! There was too much at stake. He must call Gus Saunders before two o'clock!

As the dumpy figure of Cheadle parted the curtains, Bowen caught up a small footstool—the first object to hand—and hurled it. The hassock took Cheadle in the side of the head and knocked him sprawling. Before he could recover, Bowen was upon him; and, without any mercy, struck two blows that knocked out the fat little mining man.

Moving rapidly, Bowen caught up the cords that had bound him, tied Cheadle hand and foot, and rolled the inert body under the bed. Barely had he finished and come erect, when Henderson returned to the adjoining room.

"Nothing doing yet, eh?" he sang out. The telephone rang, and saved Bowen from making any response. Henderson took the message and repeated his former commands.

"Well, didn't I tell you the stock was kiting up? Now you wait for my order to sell, and keep your ear close to the phone! I want no monkey business at the last moment."

Henderson banged up the receiver. "She's up to ninety, Cheadle!" he called exultantly. "What 'd I tell you, eh? It's just ten minutes of two now. In five minutes I'll give Charley orders to sell—"

"I'll bet you two to one you don't," said Bowen, stepping into the room.

He had thought to take Henderson by surprise; to down the thunderstruck man without a struggle. But he had far underestimated Dickover's former agent. Henderson had spread upon a small table which bore the telephone, the dishes borne in by Cheadle. Without a second's hesitation, Henderson picked up a heavy restaurant coffee-cup and hurled it fair and square at the face of his opponent.

Caught athwart the forehead by the missile, Bowen almost crumpled up. Henderson was upon him like a wildcat, beating at him with another cup. Bowen could do no more than clinch.

Locked in each other's arms, the two ment reeled back and forth, smashed over

chairs, went crashing into the wall with terrific impact. The shock separated them. Henderson's arm swept up; the heavy crockery cracked down upon Bowen's head, struck full against the blood-black bruise Cheadle had given him, and shivered to pieces.

Under that terrific blow, Bob Bowen felt himself going, and going fast. He lunged forward and caught Henderson about the body. A final great wave of strength surged into him, and he threw Henderson over his hip—an old wrestling trick. He saw the man drive head first into the wall—and saw no more. For the second time, his knees were loosened and black darkness engulfed his soul.

When he awakened again, Bowen sat up and looked around dazedly, wondering at the deadly ache in his head. He remembered by slow degrees. He saw Henderson lying across the room, lying in a limp mass. He heard the man's stertorous breathing. It was the deep, hard breathing of a man badly hurt.

Slowly Bob Bowen came to his feet. Staggering, he came to the table, clutched the bottle of milk, poured the revivifying fluid down his throat. A deep sigh of satisfaction burst from him—and then he remembered. Two o'clock! How long had he lain senseless?

With a groan, Bowen flung himself across the room to Henderson's side. His fingers trembling, he drew out Henderson's watch. It was two forty!

A moment later, Bowen seized the telephone and gave the number of Gus Saunders. He waited, frantic with suspense, until he heard the broker's voice. There might yet be hope! Cheadle might have made mistakes.

"You, Bob? Good Lord!" Saunders's tone sent his heart down. "We've been looking all over town for you—"

"What's your last report on Apex Crown?" cried Bowen hoarsely. "Has it broken—"

"Broke all to smash at two o'clock. Last report was eight cents here and going down fast. Miss Ferguson is here. You'd better come down and settle up—"

Bowen slammed the receiver on the

hook. "Oh, hell!" he said simply. "Well, we'll face the music!"

CHAPTER IX.

FEMININE INSTINCT.

BOB BOWEN sat in the private office of Gus Saunders at three fifteen. On the way down-town he had stopped at a doctor's office and had had his head bound up. As he himself put it, a couple of days would see him able to butt into another wall.

"And I've sure butted it this time," he said with assumed cheerfulness, as he concluded his story. In the eyes of Alice Ferguson he read quick sympathy—sympathy, and something else that set his pulses to leaping. But he refused to meet her eyes.

"I sure have," he went on. "Where I made my mistake was in thinking that Henderson was—was—well, that he was something less than Henderson! My one consolation is that I knocked him out so effectually that he never got word to the unknown Charley to sell out. When the news of the real condition of the Apex Crown got abroad, and the market busted all to nothing, Henderson was still rocked in the cradle of the deep. It makes me feel better to think that that skunk went down with us!

"But I'm only sorry for—for your sake, Miss Ferguson. I'm not worrying about my own money; but yours—"

"Mine is safe," said the girl, gazing at him with shining eyes.

Bowen sat up a trifle straighter. "What?"

"I have a confession to make, Mr. Bowen—a happy confession," said the girl, earnestly, leaning forward. "Mr. Saunders had been trying to get in touch with you all morning and had failed. No one knew where you were. At noon I came down here and got reports. Then the stock began to go up and up. It reached ninety, and was still climbing!

"To tell you the truth, I was afraid. Why? I can't say, except that it was just a feeling inside of me. There was no word from you; all sorts of rumors were flying

around about Apex Crown, and—and Mr. Saunders said that the stock was being so rottenly manipulated that there might be an investigation! That frightened me more than anything. So I told Mr. Saunders to sell the whole thing—”

Saunders came to his feet with a whoop of delight.

“Feminine instinct, by George!” he shouted, his repressed mirth breaking out in a roar of laughter. “Bob, old man, she made me sell out the whole blamed bunch around ninety! So help me, she did, and we did!”

Bowen stared from one to the other, staggered. He could not at first grasp the reality of what had taken place.

“You’re not trying just to brace me up—”

“Rats!” Saunders clapped him on the shoulders happily. “Not a bit of it. I’m a cold-blooded business man, and I don’t give a whoop about bracing you up! As a matter of fact, I did not get control of the stock after all. Henderson’s holdings never did come on the market, you know, except in part. So when I saw how things were going, I let Miss Ferguson boss the job. And it’s blamed lucky I did!”

“Great Jehu!” said Bowen slowly. “Then—then we’re not broke after all—”

“Not by two hundred thousand or so! Which, I judge, our friend Dickover pays—”

Bowen came to his feet, a trifle unsteadily.

“Gus,” he said, his voice solemn, but a twinkle in his gray eyes, “this can only happen once in a lifetime. Thank Heaven it happened in my lifetime! Now, see here. It was Miss Ferguson who saved the bacon to-day, and I want to tell you that she’s too good a partner to lose. Would you mind making this a real private office for a few minutes?”

With a blank look that swiftly changed to a grin of comprehension, Mr. Saunders left.

Bowen turned to Alice Ferguson, and at sight of her rapidly crimsoning countenance the old boyish smile came to his lips.

“Hold on!” he exclaimed. “Don’t say anything for about two minutes, please! I’m all done with business. I don’t want to hear the word again—between us. When I’m talking about partnership like I want to talk, I mean something else than business! Maybe you’ll think that I’m pretty sudden, but I tell you that I never met any one like you before, and I never will again. And I want you to listen, because—”

And Alice Ferguson listened.

(The end.)

THE WAY OF LOVE

BY ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH

ASK me the way of the wind, lad,
Where is the end of the sky—
Then I will tell you aright, lad,
Where sunny love isles lie.

Ask whence the red of the rose,
Song in the throat of a bird—
Then will I speak as a seer, lad,
How first breathes love’s low word.

Ask not, but take and be glad, lad,
Love is forever new.
Enough it should be for you, lad,
To know her love’s for you.

Safe and Sane

by Tod Robbins

Author of "The Terrible Three," etc.

A "DIFFERENT" SERIAL

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

IN the year 1950 conditions had not changed greatly from what they were in 1918. The great war was over, of course, also the period of readjustment; science had advanced some; the perfected airplane had pushed the automobile rather into the background, and the billionaire had arrived; millionaires were common; the world had settled down to a long period of peace, routine, and a gradually increasing universal boredom. The greatest change, however, was in the recreations of the people. Drinking, for instance, had become almost obsolete among the younger generation, who were addicted to the habit of "twirling." In the cafés the dance-floors all revolved, slowly or fast as desired. The tables were all on small platforms that revolved at a speed controllable by the occupant. The consequence was that the vice of drunkenness was replaced by that of dizziness, and a number of new diseases incident to it had sprung up.

Enright Overton was by way of being an addict to this vice. He was a clever, even brilliant, literary critic out of a job; but one day he took the bull by the horns and visited Mr. Turveydown the billionaire pickle king, succeeded in interesting him, and received a letter to another billionaire, Mr. Abbottsfield, who was greatly interested in real literary geniuses, and needed some one to discover them. Turveydown's hobby was artists. That night Overton visited the Shower House, a café near his home in Brooklyn, where he met three of his friends—Thomas Isota, the great inventor; Victor Deleplane, the writer and poet, and Jack Duprez, a celebrated artist. Being in a depressed and irritable mood he soon quarreled violently with them, and they left him. It was then that an old gentleman, who had been quietly twirling at a near-by table, came to him and introduced himself as Mr. Abbottsfield, the man to whom he had a letter of introduction from the pickle king. Abbottsfield was delighted with him, and explained—to Overton's horror—that they were hunting out geniuses, not to *help* them, but to *destroy* them. The downtrodden millionaires were about to rise and exterminate the geniuses, who showed them their own limitations, and taught them that they were really bored to death. Then he invited Overton to come with him to a meeting of the Millionaires' League. On the way, while passing through Prospect Park, they encountered Jim O'Hara, a poetic policeman, and Abbottsfield immediately killed him with a sword-cane.

He then conducted Enright deeper into the park, where they sat down on a boulder, which, when Abbottsfield pressed in a certain spot, began to revolve and sink into the ground, and presently they were falling through space at great speed. Involuntarily the young man closed his eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNITED MILLIONAIRES OF AMERICA.

AFTER some moments of giddy descent, the boulder again became stationary. Overton opened his eyes. He found himself in a dimly lighted apartment of small dimensions. The four

walls of this apartment were evidently of brown dirt. Looking up, at first he could see nothing; but gradually, as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, something very small and silvery, resembling a large coin, grew out of the shadowy heights far above. It was a patch of the evening sky. "Evidently I am at the bottom of some

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for October 26.

shaft," the young man thought, and turned toward his companion.

Mr. Abbottsfield was sitting in identically the same position as when he had first seated himself on the boulder—his large, round head was slightly bent as though in meditation; he still grasped the handle of the sword-cane, which rested between his knees. Evidently this wild descent through space had left him unmoved. Enright heard him clicking his tongue against the roof of his mouth in the manner of one who is thoroughly bored.

Once more the young man glanced about him hurriedly. Immediately in front, apparently issuing through the earthen wall, there came an incessant buzzing like the droning of a multitude of bees. Evidently the bowels of the earth were inhabited by some strange insect. Moved by a sudden curiosity, which overmastered his fear, he leaned forward and prodded the wall. What was his surprise to find that his finger did not sink into the soft dirt. It struck against some hard substance, which caused it to bend backward.

"Yes," said Mr. Abbottsfield quietly, "it's a wooden door painted the exact color of the earth. The council-chamber must be filled. Do you hear their voices? I'm afraid we're late."

"Where are we now, sir?" asked the young man with the simple air of a child. "We came down so rapidly that I lost my bearings."

"We are now sitting on my own private elevator, in my own private antechamber," said the financier. "I am about to give the sacred knock." He bent forward, and tapped three times with his sword-cane on the wooden partition. Immediately, it began to rise automatically. A bright light streamed through the widening aperture. Now a forest of human legs could be seen, which soon grew into the bodies of a large number of men. "We are in the presence of the United Millionaires of America," continued Mr. Abbottsfield. "Rise, brother—there is much work to be done."

Overton rose, and, glancing about him in wonderment, followed his employer into the subterranean council-chamber. It was of mammoth proportions—fully as large, the

young man thought, as City Hall—and was brightly lighted by a multitude of electric lamps, suspended from the lofty ceiling, which revealed a central platform, surrounded by a phalanx of benches. On this platform, was a small wooden desk, supporting the heavy baton of office; and, on either side of the desk, were three chairs. At the moment, the six chairs on the platform, the multitude of benches around it—all were occupied. Only the low stool, behind the desk, was empty. As the young man gazed about him, wondering at the size of the assembly, the simplicity of the furnishings caught his attention. The floor was of dirt, trampled hard and absolutely bare; the benches and the chairs were of pine; the desk resembled those to be found in country schoolhouses; and the baton of office looked like the shillalah that an Irishman carries to a near-by fair. Evidently these millionaires were returning to the simple ways of their forefathers.

"Surely *all* these people didn't come down on your private elevator?"

"No," replied Mr. Abbottsfield, "each man has an entrance of his own. Look around you."

The council-chamber was so large that Overton could not see the opposite wall distinctly. Glancing back over his shoulder, he saw that the wall, which he had just quitted, was riddled with small, gaping passageways—hundreds of them, cut into the naked earth. Layer on layer, they mounted to the ceiling till they made the apartment resemble a gigantic honeycomb. From some of these loftier tunnels, rope ladders dangled down.

"Those passageways wind under the city," said Mr. Abbottsfield, "each to the home of some brother. At the danger signal, this multitude would vanish into them like so many rats. But here comes Brother Featherstock. I must leave you with him." He paused, and then added with a slight flush: "My presidential duties await me."

"So *you* are the president," murmured Overton.

As the financier and his protégé approached one of the benches, a man rose and hurried toward them. This man had

one of those faces which seem not so much a face as a reflection of an emotion. The features were continually changing—the eyes, at one moment round as saucers, were at the next evil slits, loopholes through which passions glared; the mouth, at one instant drooping at the corners, at the next curved up like a cat's; even the nose seemed as flexible as a piece of India rubber. As he advanced, his face changed a dozen times before he reached them. Enright had often dreamed of such a man.

"Brother Featherstock," said the financier amiably, "let me present Brother Overton. Here is a young man who has seen the light, Brother Featherstock."

"You convert them, brother, you convert them," said the newcomer in a voice which, from a deep base, trailed away into an ineffectual squeak. "I'm glad to meet you, Brother Overton." He extended a hand to the young man which seemed to shrink at the touch. "We can forgive your keeping our president, if he has made you see the light. We are always anxious to save—yes, always anxious to save."

"But he *didn't* keep me, brother," broke in Mr. Abbotsfield. "I would have been here on time, if I hadn't stopped to kill a poetic policeman."

"You killed a poetic policeman?" cried Mr. Featherstock clapping his long, thin hands. "Splendid! Splendid! Why, I can almost see you doing it! It was with a knife, wasn't it? In the moonlight, eh? Ah, yes, yes. Splendid!"

Mr. Abbotsfield cut him short. "I want you to take charge of our new brother, Featherstock." He leaned over and whispered something into the excitable man's ear.

"You don't say so!" cried Mr. Featherstock, his long, thin mouth running up at the corners. "A critic, eh? What a find! Can you sniff them out, Brother Overton?"

"Yes," said the young man solemnly, "I can sniff them out."

"Well, I've got to be going," said Mr. Abbotsfield. "The brothers are growing impatient. Take good care of him, Brother Featherstock."

"That I will, Brother Abbotsfield—he shall see and hear everything."

The financier nodded and strode off toward the raised platform. As he passed the benches, a buzz of muttered conversation followed him, which, when he had mounted the rude steps, taken his seat at the low desk, and lifted his baton of office, broke out into a volley of deafening applause. Evidently here was a popular president.

"What a man he is!" murmured Brother Featherstock. "What a personality!" He turned to Overton—his eyes as round as saucers, one corner of his mouth pointing upward, his flexible nose twitching spasmodically. "Did you ever see any one so delightfully bored?" he asked in a voice which carried a challenge.

"No," said the young man. "I don't think I ever have."

"And you won't!" cried Mr. Featherstock. "Take my word for it, you won't. A great man, a very great man! But you must have a good seat, Brother Overton. You must see and hear everything."

Mr. Featherstock wheeled about and walked quickly forward, followed by Overton. As they passed the benches, the young man scrutinized the multitude of faces. He had seen some of them before; others were familiar to him in a vague way, as though they had surrounded him in early childhood. All of these millionaires wore white waistcoats and white spats. And their faces, too, had a marked similarity—the similarity of expression one finds in people who have lived their lives together and who have focused themselves on one common aim. They resembled a large, bored family.

Enright's new acquaintance did not pause until he had reached the foremost bench. Although it was crowded, an urgent whisper caused two of its occupants to vacate their seats to Mr. Featherstock and Overton. One of these gentlemen was very old and infirm. Overton felt sudden compunction. "It seems a shame to take such an old man's seat," he murmured.

"Nonsense," replied Mr. Featherstock. "Brother Crawley has spent his life sitting down—he's bored by it. Besides, he's a loyal member and realizes perfectly that a critic of literature can use this seat to far better advantage."

Overton, seating himself, let his eyes wander over the faces of the men who sat on the raised platform. The first of these, on the left hand side, was a man so grossly fat that he made Mr. Abbotsfield appear almost sylphlike. His face, before it had gained the rolls of soft flesh, must have been strikingly handsome—the features were still regular, the complexion vivid, and the eyes of great size and beauty. But there was a stamp of sensuality about the lips which told a tale of animal decline. The name of this colossal billionaire was Peter Pottingham. As Mr. Abbotsfield had told Overton, he was greatly interested in inventors.

Next to Pottingham sat a very old billionaire named Lewison, who, with his white straggling beard, light-blue eyes, and projecting lower lip, resembled one of those haggard goats to be found nibbling at tincans. For many years he had considered himself the possessor of much personal beauty and had had his portrait painted by De Souci. This painting, it was whispered, had destroyed forever that harmless conceit. Since then, like Mr. Turveydown, he had taken a personal interest in art and artists.

To his right sat the pickle king himself—his small plump hands clasped over his paunch. On his round face was a moody look. Between his thin red lips, at the left hand corner of his mouth, the tip of a pointed tongue projected. Mr. Abbotsfield sat next to him, holding his baton of office. And to the right of the president was a clean-shaven old man—an old man who had the worried expression of one who is continually listening for some unpleasant sound. This was Mr. Shallowstreak, who had lately become interested in musicians. Herbert Angleheart sat next to him—a billionaire with a humped back and a peculiar habit of thrusting his head forward as though he were pushing it against some invisible obstacle. This wealthy cripple owned a priceless collection of statues. At the extreme right of the platform sat a billionaire by the name of Rupert Uppingham. His long thin face wore an expression which seemed to mirror, in fragments, the various expressions of the others. If Pot-

tingham, Lewison, Turveydown, Shallowstreak, Abbotsfield, and Angleheart looked bored and unhappy, Rupert Uppingham's countenance was stamped with eternal grief. It was a look that seemed to say: "Wherever I turn, sorrow awaits me." He was a most unfortunate billionaire. A dilettante, he was interested in all the arts.

Mr. Abbotsfield rose to his feet. A buzz of applause greeted him. Flushing with pride and pleasure, he tapped the top of his desk three times with the baton. "Brothers," he cried in a ringing voice, "the fifty-seventh meeting of the Millionaires' League is called to order!" He sat down in the midst of a silence pregnant with suspense.

Scarcely was he seated before Rupert Uppingham rose. Overton, looking at him intently, thought that he had never seen such a melancholy figure. Bowing to the chair, the dilettante began to speak: "Mr. President and Brothers of the Millionaires' League, as secretary of this organization, I have been requested to give you a brief summary of what occurred at our last meeting. As you no doubt remember, four chairmen were appointed for as many committees who were to report on the growth of literature, music, invention, and art. Also by a unanimous vote, it was decided that on, or before, sunrise of the day known in the calendar as the 25th of March, 1950, a determined effort should be made to rid our civilization of the deadly microbe of genius. Also, an emissary was chosen to spread among the middle classes dissatisfaction with the common enemy. The meeting adjourned at 2 A.M., with much demonstration of rejoicing."

The secretary, bowing, sat down. All eyes were now fixed upon the president. A mutter of expectancy and excitement rose on every side. Mr. Featherstock leaned toward Overton, and whispered: "Now you'll hear our president's address. It will be masterful—masterful!"

Mr. Abbotsfield rose slowly to his feet. His large white face, for the first time that night, seemed to lose its look of patient boredom. His brown eyes flashed with unwonted brilliancy; his huge hand, which held the baton of office, trembled with emotion. There was something almost Jovelian

in the financier's august anger. One felt, seeing him thus, that the sleeping volcano behind that ample white waistcoat had at last begun to belch fire and smoke.

"Brothers and fellow slaves," he thundered in a voice that echoed through the council-chamber, "brothers and fellow slaves, at last our day has come! We have set our hands to the plow, we cannot turn back! Before to-morrow's sun has stained the sky to crimson, we, the poor despised billionaires, the downtrodden, the miserable, will have struck a blow for freedom!"

"Hear! Hear!" shouted Mr. Featherstock, writhing on his bench in ecstasy.

"Before to-morrow's sun gilds the dome of the east," continued Mr. Abbottsfield in his reverberating voice, "we will have tasted the blood of our tyrants. It is not for nothing that Brother Pottingham has lost the symmetry of manhood through the insidious wiles of the inventor. It is not for nothing that Brothers Turveydown and Lewison have been made miserable by art. It is not for nothing that Brother Shallowstreak has had his ear-drums tortured since infancy by the discords of the composer. It is not for nothing that we have all, in one way or another, been brought to the frightful realization of life, to the abyss of boredom from which there is no return. Like the early Christians, we have been forced to meet beneath the surface of the earth; but, unlike the early Christians, our motto is not love but hate! And it is only through this hate, my brothers, that the future race of man can live free from the persecutions that we have suffered. In the distant centuries, I see a race of strong, simple people—our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren—living on to a happy, thoughtless old age, little guessing that their lives are useless, scarcely realizing the meaning of that word which symbolizes our despair. And they will thank us; these happy, stupid folk will thank us—"

At this point in his address, the president's eyes were swimming with tears; his voice faltered and broke; he covered his face with his hands. All about Overton, millionaires were wiping their eyes and coughing. Mr. Featherstock was sobbing audibly.

Mastering his emotions by a great effort, Mr. Abbottsfield continued his address: "With us, of course, it is all over," he said sadly. "But the young children, who have not as yet come in contact with the pernicious germ of genius; the generations still unborn; the middle-classes, which, our emissary assures us, are untouched—all these we may save. Is it not a wonderful thing, my brothers, to realize that *we*, a mere handful of insignificant millionaires, hold the well-being of the race in our hands? This thought should inspire us, this thought should edge the sword of just vengeance. When the hour hand on the clock touches that fateful hour—four!—when the chimes ring out that hour, gird up your loins and hasten out, hasten out sword in hand! Hunt the genius down—hunt him down, if you have to drag him from the altar or from his wedding-bed!"

"We will, we will!" cried a number of voices.

"I know you will, my brothers," said Mr. Abbottsfield proudly. "Thank you." He sat down.

For a moment there was a dead silence, and then a volley of deafening applause rang through the council-chamber. Overton, looking about him, saw nothing but flushed faces and brightly flashing eyes. An army of waving hands stretched back to the rear of the room. Many of these hands held weapons aloft—swords, knives, revolvers. "So this is the end of genius," Enright murmured and closed his eyes in pain.

"Look! Look!" cried Mr. Featherstock, touching the young man on the shoulder. "The chairmen on the different committees will now report."

The shouts and wild cheering died away. Peter Pottingham was the first to rise. He did so with an effort which turned his face purple and bedewed his forehead with perspiration. "Mr. President," he began in a wheezing, asthmatic voice, "as chairman on the committee of invention, I have no name to suggest for the black list with the exception of Thomas Isota. He is said to be an inventor of promise. Already he has caused us great suffering, dooming us to the boredom of inertia. I suggest that he

be annihilated as soon as possible. At present he is to be found at his home in Great River." Bowing to the chair, he sank back with a grunt of utter exhaustion.

The next to rise was Mr. Turveydown. He leaped from his seat with the elasticity of a rubber-ball. "Mr. President!" he cried in his high, windy voice, "I have also a name to add. Duprez, an artist whom I have long awaited, has arrived from Paris. My detectives inform me that he is at present with Isota at Great River. By all means, annihilate him. He is a portrait painter of genius."

Mr. Abbotsfield again rose to his feet. "I, myself, have a name to suggest," he said, "the name of the most dangerous man of them all. You, who have read the works of Deleplane, can readily appreciate the suffering which he inflicts upon us by his brutal realism."

"My brother committed suicide after reading his book, 'The Business Man,'" said a voice in the rear of the council-chamber.

"He has shortened my life by years!" cried another voice. "But, at that, he has made it seem endless."

"He is in America," the President continued calmly. "Deleplane, like Duprez, is at Isota's house in Great River." Then, drawing himself to his full height, he cried out in a ringing voice: "The time is ripe for vengeance! Our enemies are in our hands! When the clock strikes four, they are yours! The works of these men shall also die. I have the plates of practically every great book of the century. *They* shall be destroyed! Turveydown, Lewison, Angleheart, and Uppingham have, between them, every great painting and statue in the world. At the appointed hour, *these* shall be destroyed! For a lifetime, we have toiled just for this—just to obliterate the works of genius which have so darkened our days. And we have collected everything, paying enormous prices; while people have wondered and shaken their heads, saying: 'These men have evidently become lovers of art.' Lovers of art?—ah, no, we have become haters of art! The joy of destruction, that great primitive instinct, has taken hold of us. And now, in our pride, we say

to our enemies: 'Look, we are greater than you! What it has taken you years to create, we can demolish in an instant by the blow of a hammer! Then, who, after all, wins?'"

"Yes," came a mighty shout from his hearers, "we *can* destroy!" Again all faces were flushed, all eyes were bright. Overton, in his despair, groaned aloud. This, indeed, was to be the end of his world.

"Before I send you out to your long deferred feast, brothers," resumed the president, "it would be as well to hear a few words from our emissary, Brother Thompson. Although of the class which has not yet risen, the poorer middle-class, still he has been terribly bored for years. If Brother Thompson is here, will he kindly step forward? Make way for him, brothers—make way for him."

CHAPTER IX.

UNCLE SPIKE.

OVERTON was to experience many surprises before the sun rose, but none which could affect him so much as this. When he recognized the old man, who at that moment was mounting the steps of the platform—when he saw the thin, cadaverous face, pale, watery blue eyes, and long high-shouldered figure of his own uncle—the council-chamber seemed to revolve slowly about him. He turned his eyes away, and tried to focus his scattered wits on this mirage. What could Uncle Spike be doing here? In this hornet's nest, why such a harmless old drone as he? What was the meaning of it all? Uncle Spike should have been in bed hours ago—safe, sane, and snoring. It was inconceivable that he should be here. It must be a coincidence in name, a striking resemblance—nothing more. This dangerous emissary of the Millionaires' League could not be his weak-spirited, old-fashioned, harmless Uncle Spike.

Again the young man turned his eyes toward the platform. Mr. Thompson was shaking the president's hand. Good God! there could be no doubt about it—it *was* his Uncle Spike. He recognized the old

man's Sunday suit of mottled brown, his scarf-pin, the gold tooth that glittered when he smiled. Yes, it was, indeed, Uncle Spike—Uncle Spike wearing a new white waistcoat and spotless, incongruous spats.

"Brothers," said Mr. Abbotsfield, "I take great pleasure in introducing to you our worthy emissary, Brother Thompson. He wishes to speak of the middle-classes and his own experiences which forced him into our society. You have the floor, Brother Thompson." The president bowed and sat down.

Enright watched his uncle, fascinated. Mr. Thompson was very evidently ill at ease. He cleared his throat several times, and, smiling nervously, licked his dry lips with his tongue. Overton, strange to say, felt the old man's embarrassment—he had an uncomfortable feeling that his aged relative was about to make a fool of himself before strangers. He was tempted to cry out a word or two of encouragement.

From the rear of the room came a few impatient remarks: "We haven't got all night, Brother Thompson!" "Out with it, man!" "We want to go home!"

Mr. Thompson again cleared his throat, and, like one about to take a cold plunge, launched out into speech. Overton watched him anxiously, lest he fail.

"Brothers," said the old man in a thin, quavering voice, "I am not used to public speaking—in fact this is the first speech I ever made in all my life."

"Cut it short!" cried a loud voice in the crowd. Mr. Abbotsfield pounded the desk with his baton.

"I intend to make this speech as short as possible, brothers," continued Mr. Thompson. "I am one of the poorer middle-class—a class that you gentlemen have always treated kindly. We are beginning to realize this kindness thoroughly; beginning to realize that, by making us work very hard for our daily bread, you have spared us much painful thought. *You* have suffered; *we* have only sweated."

There came a muffled cheer from his hearers. Mr. Abbotsfield nodded his head in approbation. Enright was dumfounded. Uncle Spike wasn't making such a fool of himself after all.

"You, my brothers, with your unlimited means for suffering," resumed Mr. Thompson, "can scarcely realize how happy we are—*we*, who work ten hours a day, have barely enough food to eat, and who are perpetually enlivened by the thought that the wolf may be growling at the door! All these things make life worth living. *We* haven't time to say to ourselves: 'Existence is a bore.' Ah, no, it is very precious because it is precarious. What do we care for literature? It cannot disturb us, because our minds have become incapable of understanding anything but the cheapest platitudes. Inventions, paintings, music, are beyond our means. Our idea of heaven is what you have found to be hell—sitting peacefully with folded hands. It will continue to remain our idea of heaven, because you are kind enough never to allow us to sit peacefully with folded hands."

Again there came a burst of applause. Enright felt a grateful warmth stealing over him. Uncle Spike was a match for these millionaires. He was upholding the honor of the family.

"And so it was with me," continued Mr. Thompson, when the cheering had died away. "I was happy, perfectly contented with my lot, as incapable of becoming bored as a day-laborer, till one day my sister presented me with a nephew. Even then I had a morbid fear of him. His eyes were too large, and filled with an unhealthy understanding; his nose was also large, and seemed capable of smelling out the truths of life. Although I dreaded Enright in the cradle, little did I guess that some day he was to make my existence a living hell."

Mr. Thompson paused, and rubbed his hand across his forehead with an uneasy gesture. Enright sat immovable, frozen with surprise. What was Uncle Spike saying now?

"After my brother-in-law's death, I went to live with my sister. From the time that child was old enough to talk, I assure you that I never had an hour's peace. He was always questioning my right to live: Why did I do this or that? What was the use of slaving all day and sleeping all night? What could to-morrow possibly bring to such a man as I? And when he

grew older, he used to read me books by geniuses—books which carefully explained the horrors of my existence, horrors that I never knew were there. Gradually, this nephew of mine soured my life. How can I make you understand my sufferings? His sneers and innuendos were as nothing compared to the frightful truths that he made me see. Eventually, like you, my millionaire brothers, I became bored. Life was no longer a cheerful grind; it became a shadowy cave filled with the specters of genius. There is nothing left for me now but vengeance. Enright Overton is my sister's son, but he must die!"

Overton felt that his head was revolving on his shoulders. The old man's words, like heavy stones, seemed to be falling, one by one, on his heart. Forgetting everything in the agony of the moment, he cried aloud in a voice mournful as an echo: "Oh, Uncle Spike, how can you!"

"What!" cried Mr. Thompson. "Is he here?" He glared around the room, and then straight into his nephew's eyes.

"We are betrayed!" squeaked Mr. Turveydown, bounding from his chair.

"Seize him!" roared the president in his bull's bellow. "The wages of the spy is death!"

And then all became confusion. Men leaped up from the benches like a breaking wave. Enright felt the thin, nervous hands of Mr. Featherstock clutching at his throat. With a cry of terror, he tore himself away and fled wildly toward the nearest passage. Behind him, like a pack of hounds giving tongue, came the Millionaires' League, jostling each other in their haste, shouting, screaming, leaping forward with groping, outstretched fingers. And, although the young man did not glance behind him when he flung himself into the tunnel, he knew with a dreadful certitude that Uncle Spike led them all—Uncle Spike, with a new strange face of horror, like the masks one sees in carnival-time—and that close at his heels ran Turveydown, bounding forward like a rubber ball—Turveydown with his stiff, unbending whiskers and his paunch shaking like a bag of jelly—Turveydown, whining as he ran, as a terrier whines at the scent of game.

There are times in nearly every man's life when he is surprised by a certain aptitude for excelling past performances. As a boy, Enright had known that he could run well; as a young man, he had never given the matter a thought. But now this forsaken, scorned talent was standing him in good stead. He realized, as he sped along the subterranean passageway—his long legs covering ground at immense strides, his head thrown back, his nostrils dilating—that he was running on record time, or close to it; and far beneath the fear of his pursuers, which was pounding against his heart like a sledgehammer, far beneath all the fanciful terrors of that night, was the small quiet voice of an incomprehensible pride. There is nothing which makes us so young as danger. Those, who live in constant fear of death, are boys at heart. Life is a glorious game to them—they are playing hide-and-go-seek with Father Time.

The tunnel, through which Overton sped like a meteor, was long, narrow, and wound in and out like a rabbit's burrow. It was lighted, at every fifty yards or so, by small electric bulbs hanging from the ceiling. As the young man sprang into one of these tiny cases of light, he felt a tingling sensation between his shoulder-blades; as he bounded forward through the shadows again, it was with a gasp of relief.

Once he could not resist looking back over his shoulder; and then for a brief instant, sixty yards away, he saw the tall, thin figure of his Uncle Spike. He was running silently, his long neck thrust forward, his face wreathed into ugly wrinkles. In that brief instant, Overton, with a shudder, noticed that the old man's derby now sat at a rakish angle; and that, although Uncle Spike's legs were moving so fast that they were merely a blurred outline, his arms hung absolutely motionless at his sides, and his body, from the waist upward, might have been the torso of a statue so lifeless did it seem. Turveydown and the other pursuing millionaires were not yet in view. Again the young man felt a strange thrill of pride. Evidently he and Uncle Spike had distanced them all.

And, as the chase continued, Overton

felt that he was even gaining on his relative. Never in his life had he run so fast or so far. And he was not fatigued. On the contrary, he seemed to grow stronger at every stride. His legs carried him smoothly, without effort, as though in reality they were some new mechanical device. And, when he looked behind him the second time, Uncle Spike had fallen back a hundred yards or more; while far down the tunnel, four lights away, he saw for an instant the small gesticulating figure of the pursuing pickle king.

The passageway seemed endless. As far as the eye could reach, stretched a long line of electric lights, glowing like a string of precious stones. One by one, he passed them; only to have others take their places. The scent of moist earth was in his nostrils; the dull thudding of his feet was the only sound to be heard. He had shaken off his pursuers—even Uncle Spike was nowhere to be seen. They were far back, behind that bend in the tunnel he had turned a full minute before. But where did this passageway lead to? Perhaps into another council-room of the Millionaires' League, where there would be strong, silent men waiting for him—men who had been warned that a spy was trying to escape. But no. Had not Mr. Abbottsfield told him that these tunnels were the private passageways of the conspirators? If this were the case, at any moment now he could expect to find himself in the strange house of one of his enemies—in a house where, if he escaped being seized as a spy, he would most certainly be shot down as a burglar.

Thinking in this wise, the young man again reached one of those sudden turns. Rounding it at full speed, he uttered a cry of horror and came to an abrupt halt. "Now I *am* done for!" he muttered.

Overton had run up against a solid wall of earth. It was the termination of the subterranean passageway. This was indeed the end! Behind him, his Uncle Spike—that new and terrible Uncle Spike—led on the demoniac pack of millionaires; before him was an impenetrable barricade. Evidently this tunnel had never been completed. Perhaps it was being dug for some new member of the organization. The

young man had a wild impulse to claw at the dirt with his finger-nails. Overcoming himself by an almost superhuman effort, he turned about to face his enemies. He felt that he must not disgrace the lost but illustrious cause of art. He would show these portly bourgeoisie how to die.

As Overton awaited the coming of his executioners, he took an exceptional pride in his personal appearance. If there had been a mirror in the tunnel, he would have studied himself in it. Cyrano de Bergerac defying death, he imagined, could not have cut a more heroic figure than he, Enright Overton, defying the Millionaires' League. Thinking thus, he wished he had a sword. The best that he could find was a broken broom-handle. It lay on the ground at his feet; and would have been quite invisible, had not its end projected into a small stream of light which made its way around the turn of the passage. Bending down swiftly, the young man seized this weapon; and then, rising to his full height, and throwing back his head with the gesture of a roused lion, he stood on guard.

He now knew that his courage would not desert him. When an imaginative soldier once realizes this, he becomes a hero. Enright Overton, in spite of his bony arms and legs, his pipe-stem neck, his puny chest, felt, at the moment, that he had the strength of a giant. All his life he had been persecuted by a not uncommon fear—a fear that, if something quite out of the ordinary should happen to him, if he should be suddenly exposed to some unknown danger, he would become so terror-stricken that he might very well lose his mind. It was therefore a fear of fear, and nothing else. Now all these unhealthy fancies had disappeared, blown away in an instant by a real, urgent peril. Grasping the broom-handle firmly, he waited. "I'll show them!" he muttered. "I'll show them!"

And now, from far down the passageway, there came a muffled, continuous sound. At first it was a confused pattering, not unlike the rain on the roof at night; but gradually it grew louder and louder, till it seemed like the tread of a marching host. Not a voice was raised in a shout, a laugh, or a curse—it was a steady

monotonous *thud, thud, thud*, which carried in itself the stolid sneer of invincible force. Enright realized that his fate was approaching on these many tramping feet. With one of those involuntary instincts which man has at such moments, he glanced upward. Then he dropped the broom-handle; and a cry of surprise echoed down the corridor.

Ten feet above his head was a small wooden partition. It was closed, and in the darkness would not have been observed were it not for the light which shone through the cracks between the boards. Evidently on the other side of it, there was a conspirator's house. But was it possible to reach this trap-door. It was at the right-hand corner of the tunnel, where the wall seemed precipitous enough. The young man darted forward, and began to feel the earth with his hands. After some moments of fruitless search, his fingers touched something round and hard. Reaching up higher, he felt another. There could be no doubt about it—these were pieces of wood driven into the earth to form a kind of rough ladder.

"Thank God!" cried Overton. Now, that a loop-hole of escape had offered itself, he began to be tortured by fear. As he scrambled up the ladder, he lost all that was heroic in his pose. From a cornered lion awaiting the hunter with lifted crest, he became a bleating sheep fleeing from the butcher. From the heights of despair, he sang to the abyss of hope. When he reached the top of the ladder, his hands trembled so that he could scarcely control them—he was in a pitiful state of funk. A brave man is only brave because he looks danger in the face—when he turns his back, he runs as fast as the coward.

Overton pushed at the trap-door with all his might. It remained stationary. It resisted his efforts. Could it be locked, he asked himself? *Thud, thud, thud*—the footsteps of his pursuers echoed through the corridor. At any moment his Uncle Spike might come leaping around the corner. As he pushed with his shoulder, he turned a white, terror-stricken face toward the bend in the passageway. How these footsteps reverberated against his heart! Now the

trap-door was giving a little—the aperture, through which the light sifted, grew larger. He would escape after all! Good God! Too late! His enemies were upon him!

At that moment, the silent, ghostly figure of Uncle Spike sped around the corner like a shadow, and made straight for the ladder.

"Keep back!" shouted Enright in a high nervous voice. "Keep back, I say!"

Uncle Spike, still wearing his familiar derby at that unfamiliar angle, his long, thin face upturned and grinning, seized his nephew by the ankle. "I've got you, En!" he cried. "I've got you!"

What happened then, Overton never remembered clearly. He heard a voice, which must have been his own, scream out: "Let go of me!" He must have kicked his uncle in the face, for he saw the old man fall straight back into the arms of Turveydown, who had just then turned the corner—Turveydown, who was leaping forward like a rubber ball. And then he must have pushed at the trap-door with his last remnant of strength; for suddenly it opened wide, like a giant's jolly mouth, and he climbed out into safety.

But before he closed it in the faces of his enemies, before he closed it and slipped the iron bar into place, he looked down for an instant. There was Uncle Spike and Turveydown, scrambling to their feet; and there, with a roar and a shout, came Abbotsfield and his men, hot for the taste of blood. "Hold him!" they cried. "Hold him! A critic is escaping!"

Panting millionaires filled the passageway from wall to wall. They reeked with perspiration. Their stomachs rose and fell. Their eyes, burning with baffled hate, were fixed upon him. And then, smiling down on this multitude of red and bloated faces, Overton very leisurely closed the door.

CHAPTER X.

TRAPPED.

THE room in which the young man now found himself was evidently the cellar of some house. By the light from a gas-jet, he could see the iron door of the

furnace, the coal-bin beside it, and a large shovel lying on the stone floor. The personality of a house rarely descends beneath the kitchen. This cellar might have been any one of a thousand about the city.

Overton, after his exertions and excitement, felt completely done up. The floor was dirty; but he sprawled full length upon it, immediately above the trap-door. Far beneath him, from the bowels of the earth, he could still hear a confused buzzing sound. He smiled. This must be the baffled millionaires muttering their disappointment to one another. He pictured his uncle's despair at having his vengeance thwarted. He was probably pouting now, as Enright had often seen him pout when there was no cream for his coffee. And Mr. Abbotsfield? How hot he must be! The sweat must be pouring down his large, round face.

Then there was Turveydown. He could imagine that small, rotund billionaire bounding up and down from sheer rage. There was something exceedingly droll about the pickle king. He might do terrible things, commit unspeakable crimes, and yet to Overton he would remain a comic to the end of his days. Perhaps, of all these strange dangerous men, he was the one whom Enright feared the most; and yet, for some unaccountable reason, while thinking of him with a shudder, the young man could not restrain a smile.

As he lay at full length upon the floor, breathing heavily like some animal that has been pursued and driven to cover, the buzzing beneath him suddenly stopped. Now there was a complete silence. Evidently the millionaires had returned down the passageway. Again fear touched Enright's heart. Why was he lying here, wasting the precious minutes in which so much must be done? Before the clock struck four, that hour when the massacre of genius would begin, he must escape and warn his friends to fly.

He rose stiffly to his feet, and, brushing the coal-dust from his clothes, started cautiously ascending the stairs which led to the upper regions of the house. Every time a loose board creaked, he stopped and listened. The perspiration, which had flowed

plentifully from the unwonted exercise, now made him feel as though his body were enwrapped in a cold, damp sheet. *This* must be one of the strongholds of the enemy. The slightest sound might betray him.

At the head of the stairs was the cellar door. Enright put his hand on the knob, and, turning it, pushed gently. It opened with a plaintive squeak, as though some tiny animal were being crushed to death behind it. He expected to hear some loud, angry voice cry out: "Who is there?" For ten minutes he waited—all was silence. Perhaps this squeak had not awakened the house after all. Nerving himself to a great effort, he again pushed the door; and then, with a feeling that he was going to his death, stepped bravely forward. At the next moment, he reeled back with a stifled cry.

Overton had stepped out into the hallway of his own house. There could be no doubt about it. The night light was burning dully in the passage. The young man could see the hat-rack with its cracked mirror, the two porcelain umbrella-stands, and the large plaster vase minus a handle. But more assuring than even these familiar objects of a lifetime, was the atmosphere of the place. This hall, you might say, smelled of home. Nothing had changed since he had left, except that Uncle Spike's hat and coat had disappeared.

This last great surprise stunned Enright. He had been treading as silently as a ghost, starting at every little noise, trembling when his shoes creaked, while all the time he had been in his own house! The relief was too great. His overstrained nerves gave way. Seating himself on the chair near the hat-rack, he burst out into a fit of hysterical laughter. He laughed like a feeble old man, slapping his thighs with his hands, stamping his feet on the carpet, wagging his head from side to side.

At last he wiped the tears from his eyes. Here he was wasting time again! He had escaped for the moment; but who could tell when Uncle Spike would open the front door with his latch-key and pounce in upon him. Suddenly an idea occurred to him. Up-stairs, in his closet, were a pair of old white spats and a white flannel waistcoat.

If he were to venture out into the night again, it would be as well to safeguard himself against the millionaires. He would wear their uniform when the hour of the massacre arrived.

Overton ran up the front stairs, two at a time. Now noise relieved his spirits. He was like a boy who has been kept in after school and who is finally liberated. Ordinarily, the fear of awakening Mrs. Overton, of hearing her reproaches, would have made him as noiseless as an Indian stalking his game; but now even *she* had become a secondary consideration to the Millionaires' League. As he passed her door, he heard her heavy breathing without so much as a quiver of suspense. For the time, he felt himself to be a grown man, quite capable of taking care of his own affairs. Let her sleep—that was a woman's job—but, in times of danger, men should be up and stirring.

Soon he reached his own door. Pushing it open, he walked over to the bureau and lit the electric light. Immediately all the objects of the room sprang into prominence. The raven seemed to open its beady eyes with an aggrieved air, as though saying angrily: "Why disturb me in this, my hour of sleep?" The plaster gargoyle immediately broke into its everlasting, mirthless grimace, making one thin.. that in the darkness it had a new and strange expression. It startled Overton to think that, while he had passed through so many surprising adventures—adventures that had threatened his very life—these inanimate objects remained unchanged, untouched by anything that had befallen him. It seemed that he had been away from his room a long, long time. He looked at the various articles of furniture, like one who has been on a journey and has returned to the home of his childhood. He felt that he had suddenly grown years older.

Enright walked over to the closet and made an inspection of his wardrobe. There, hanging on a hook in one corner, he found the white waistcoat which he was in search of; and beneath it, on the floor, a pair of ragged white spats. Here was the uniform of the enemy.

As he proceeded to put them on, he let

his mind wander back to the council chamber of the millionaires and his escape through the passageway. What a fortunate thing it was that he had happened to run into the one tunnel that could have brought him to his own house! There were hundreds of others, any one of which he might have taken. There was something miraculous about his using his uncle's private passageway. Possibly he was not so absolutely unaided as he had imagined. Perhaps some divinity watched over him—some all-powerful divinity who was unwilling to let genius die out of the world.

When the young man had completed his toilet for the difficult rôle which he had to play, he surveyed himself in the mirror of his dresser. The white waistcoat and spats were shabby; still they were as good as those which his uncle had worn that very night. If the worst came to the worst, he could easily pass as one of the poorer brothers whom the millionaires' emissary had roused to open revolt. Overton smiled at his reflection and walked over to the window.

He looked up at the sky with one of those wondering glances that only dreamers have. Now, that he was in his own room, he felt delightfully drowsy. He thought that he had earned the right to while away a few lazy moments before sallying out on his perilous mission. How bright the stars were! They dotted the heavens, legion on legion of them, stretching away as far as the eye could see. Resembling golden grapes hanging on invisible vines, they clustered there waiting for that giant, Time, to pluck them one by one. The moon had long since vanished. The black, ragged outline of housetops rolled away from him, like the uneven surface of a frozen sea. Somewhere in the distance a red glow suddenly leaped up into the sky. From the river came the mournful call of a fog-horn like the insistent bellow of a child who is lost.

The young man lowered his eyes. Beneath him the street seemed deserted. Above it hung a soft nebula of mist. It looked very far away to-night, as though the house had grown in the darkness to much greater proportions. Suddenly he saw

four men approaching. They walked arm in arm and seemed to be arguing with one another. They were gesticulating wildly. They stopped beneath a light on the other side of the street; and Overton, staring at them, again felt a tremor of fear. All four of these men wore ominous, white waist-coats and white spats.

There was no more time to waste. He must be off. The tallest of these men looked very much like Uncle Spike; and in Uncle Spike's possession was the key to the front door. Evidently they had come after him. He had escaped before, but could he again escape? At any moment now he might hear the front door open and the soft, shuffling footsteps of the assassins.

CHAPTER XI.

FLIGHT.

OVERTON caught up his hat and coat. He hurried out into the passageway.

Although he felt vaguely conscious that he was leaving his familiar little room for the last time, he barely gave it a farewell glance. Tiptoeing to the staircase, he began to descend it stealthily, stopping every now and then to listen. There was no sound. Everything was as still as death. When he reached the second landing, he again heard his mother's stentorian breathing. It caused him an uneasy feeling. He felt that, in this hushed house where danger lurked, such a sound was unseemly. While he was in fear for his own life, while the genius of the world hung in the balance, his mother was sleeping and positively snoring! There was something unpardonable about it; something that gave a savor of the ludicrous to the heroic; something which made the young man say to himself with a sob of self-pity: "She never understood me—never!"

When Overton reached the front hall, he stepped into the parlor, and, pulling the window-curtain toward him, peered out into the street. The four men were still standing beneath the light. The tallest was undoubtedly Uncle Spike. Enright recognized the old man's dented derby, even if it were worn rather rakishly over one ear. They

seemed to be still arguing. Mr. Thompson waved his arms about frantically. Now he started forward as though he were about to cross the street. At that two of his companions seized him by the arms; the third, drawing out his watch, scrutinized it intently.

And the young man watched this pantomime with a shudder, thinking that he knew why Uncle Spike was so impatient to cross the street. What had he ever done to make this old man hate him so? Evidently the conspirators were waiting for the hour to arrive which had been agreed upon. He could still escape by the back way. *Now* was no time to linger. See how Uncle Spike was straining forward, like a hound on the leash. Another five minutes, and it might be too late.

Overton hurried out into the hallway, and along it to the library in the rear. Flashing on the light, he pushed past the leather rocking-chair, past the table, and straight to the window which opened on a little balcony not ten feet from the ground.

Raising this window, he stood for a moment looking out. There was no one in the yard. A rug which had been beaten dustless hung limply on the clothes-line. Its black shape moved helplessly and uneasily as the wind stirred it. Beyond was the fence; and then an alley where he could escape. Once more he would give the Millionaires' League the slip. He put one his long, thin legs through the window.

As he was feeling with his foot for the floor of the balcony, the grandfather clock in the library began striking the hour. Overton counted the strokes: "One—two—three—four!" When the last echo died away, there came a rasping sound from the hall. Uncle Spike's key was slowly turning in the lock of the front door. With a smothered gasp of fright the young man literally dived through the window.

Although he struck against the railing of the balcony, he felt nothing. He vaulted down into the yard and began to scale the fence. As he looked back over his shoulder at the half-open window, he saw the white, convulsed face of his uncle pop out of it like some kind of wicked jack-in-the-box. It turned slowly from right to left, and

then abruptly disappeared. With a sigh of relief, Overton let his body slide down till his feet touched the ground. Once more a benevolent God had intervened.

Overton found the side street deserted. Evidently his pursuers had not yet discovered his whereabouts. Hardly had his feet touched the pavement before he set off at a brisk trot toward Sixth Avenue. At this hour of the morning there would be very few electric cars running; and, rather than take the risk of waiting for one, he had decided on walking to the Atlantic Avenue station. Here, if his memory were not at fault, he could get a train for Great River at fifteen minutes after four.

As the young man jogged along, he had an unpleasant feeling that the dark, silent houses were watching him secretively from behind drawn blinds. It seemed to him that he was running the gantlet between two lines of sleeping giants; giants who at any moment might awake, open their eyes, and seize him. And Overton experienced that strange sensation which often overpowers imaginative men—the sensation that he was pitifully and hopelessly small.

He looked up at the shadowy buildings with the vague hostility of the pygmy. What matter that he moved and breathed, what matter if he succeeded or failed, what matter if he outdistanced his pursuers? Before he had been born, these giants had stood immovably thus; after he was dead they would still remain. They watched him with the impassive sneer of supreme strength; watched him, the human fly, crawling past; watched him, rejoicing in the knowledge that what man builds is mightier than he.

Turning up Sixth Avenue, Enright hastened on his way. But now the brownstone houses had given place to shops. They were of a more recent period and of a cheerier aspect. They did not look down upon him with the sneering superiority of age and respectability. The young man's flagging hopes brightened. Again the pride of his mission exhilarated him like wine. His pace, which had slackened under the heavy load of his despondency, now grew faster. Finally he broke into a run. If he expected to catch the train, he must hurry;

and everything depended upon his catching that train.

Suddenly he came to an abrupt halt, and uttered a startled cry. What was this? He looked straight up into a human face—a human face with an inhuman smile.

The body of a man was hanging from the cross-bar of a lamp-post immediately before him. A rope was about its neck. The legs dangled down pathetically with the hopeless air of things which know they are of no further use. The face was as yellow as wax; the head tilted violently toward the left shoulder, as though the corpse were listening. A tuft of hair on the chin moved slightly as the breeze stirred it. The body wore evening clothes. Its overcoat had been removed. Suspended from the shoulder-blades, directly in front of the shirt-bosom, were a violin and a broken bow. Enright recognized the dead man with a gasp of horror—it was Ivan Cherovski, the famous composer.

So this was the first work of the Millionaires' League! Words are only words at the most—they are the seed which may or may not spring to fruit. To Overton, the financier with a worried look—that financier who took a personal interest in musicians—seemed too mild a man to go to such violent lengths. He could have sworn that Shallowstreak would have been the one to whom all things might be possible but murder. Why, the billionaire had blinked his eyes behind his spectacles like an old maid teaching Sunday-school! If he were responsible for this, as no doubt he was, what might not Turveydown and Abbotsfield do?

Goose-flesh rippled over Enright's skin. Giving the corpse of the musician a terrified look, he darted past it and down the street. He felt that the Millionaires' League was again on his trail and in hot pursuit. The very dead man, who hung as jauntily as a fat turkey in a butcher's window, might, with the perverse instinct of one who has nothing to lose, be pointing after him with a long, accusing finger. On such a night anything was possible.

Never had he seen the city streets so deserted. Usually, at even such an hour, revelers from the revolving tables would be encountered. Now he saw none. As he

started down Flatbush Avenue, he saw the bright lights of an electric car a block or two behind him. He resolved that it should not catch him up until he had reached the station. Who could tell? One of his enemies might be on it.

At this thought his long legs flashed back and forth like piston-rods; and, although the car was coming fast, it gained on him only very gradually. It came jumping along on the tracks, its single eye fixed on the fleeing young man like the eye of some malevolent dragon attempting to mesmerize its prey. Now Overton could see the station. A moment more, and he had crossed the tracks and reached his destination. Turning, he looked back over his shoulder.

The car had come to a stop. Through its windows, he could see a dozen men rising to their feet. Their white spats and waistcoats gleamed in the electric light. With that single glance, Enright recognized both Abbotsfield and Turveydown. One was toying idly with his sword-cane; the other held a short, black revolver in his pale, plump hand. Overton dived into the station as a rabbit dives into its burrow. Evidently he would have traveling companions.

He found the waiting-room deserted. The clock on the wall indicated fifteen minutes after four. Had the train gone? No, a short, fat man was just shutting the gate. Enright dashed through, and waited in the shadow of a pillar a dozen yards farther on. He soon heard the sound of hurrying feet, and saw the faces of his pursuers drawing near. All were running frantically. Before they had reached the gate, it closed; and the small, fat man, with that pleasure in playing the tyrant which all petty officials have, smiled at them through the grating.

"Too late, gentlemen," he said.

CHAPTER XII.

A LITTLE MISTAKE.

OVERTON had again escaped an imminent danger. When he boarded the train, it was with a feeling of unbounded joy. Opening the door of a car,

he glanced cautiously in, and, seeing no one but an old man who was evidently fast asleep—a man without a white waistcoat and white spats—he entered boldly and took a seat opposite him. Apparently all the members of the Millionaires' League had missed the train. There would be but one stop before they reached the open country. After that all chance of immediate peril was past. He heaved a sigh of relief and crossed his legs.

Although every bone in his body ached, although his eyelids were heavy from lack of sleep, Overton decided to stay awake. It would never do to lose his grip on the world of reality, to lie there helpless at the mercy of any murderous millionaire who happened to board the train. When he had left the city behind him, why, then perhaps a few minutes of complete repose might freshen his faculties for what lay before.

The young man felt that it was necessary to fix his attention on something. Nothing could be seen through the window but a moving curtain of darkness. The sleeping old gentleman was his only salvation. Before this, Overton had often whiled away boring minutes by examining the most commonplace physiognomies. Studying human faces was a weakness of his. He had convinced himself that he could read the characters of others, while in reality he was unfamiliar with his own. Deleplane had often said to him: "Enright, you look at people till they hypnotize you."

Now he began to stare at the only other occupant of the car. The old gentleman had taken off a tall silk hat. It rested on the rack above his head. His face, Enright thought, was the face of an old fool. It had an innocent, childish look about it. There was an august curve to the brow which said, "Respect me"; a plaintive droop to the lips which whispered, "Pity me." In repose, when the mask usually falls, there was no bitterness here, no ugliness, no cruelty—a rare occurrence in such an age—and above it all a crown of white hair rested as lightly as a wave of snow. After his night of terror this countenance calmed the soul of the young man. It ex-

pressed something that transcends joy—it expressed perfect peace. Moonlight resting on water can give such an effect, but only when the water is untroubled. Such a face is a pool reflecting heaven. Enright murmured: "He is sleeping very soundly." It was not until a moment later that he realized this old gentleman was dead.

When he saw the handle of the dagger projecting from the frock coat of his traveling companion, when he heard the slow, intermittent patter of blood-drops on the floor, Overton, for the first time in his life, had a wild impulse to throw back his head and howl like a wolf. His nerves seemed to be twisting into knots. Wherever he turned, death confronted him. First it was in the park, lying on an asphalt path; next dangling from a lamp-post, before his very face; and now sitting in a chair opposite him with that wonderfully peaceful expression. The young man rose from his seat. Horror overmastered him. If the world had become populated by men capable of doing such deeds, he and his friends were well out of it. For an instant he thought of leaping from this ill-fated train, of dashing his brains out against the nearest iron girder. Anything was preferable to the brutality of life.

As Overton rose, the door of the car opened and the conductor stepped in. He was a powerfully built man, with excessive breadth of shoulder. He had light-blue eyes, a sallow skin, and a long, flexible nose that twitched slightly. For a moment he surveyed Enright from beneath lowered lashes. Suddenly he smiled at the young man and nodded his head.

"Tickets, please," he said, advancing with outstretched hand.

"There's a dead man!" Overton cried, pointing to the corpse with a trembling finger. "He's been murdered!"

"As dead as a door-nail," said the railroad official pleasantly, pulling out his ticket-puncher and twirling it around his forefinger. "A good job—he never even squirmed. Tickets, please."

And then Overton noticed that the conductor, although wearing his customary uniform, had added to it an incongruous white waistcoat and white spats. The

young man shuddered. So here was one of the poorer brothers of the Millionaires' League—perhaps one of Uncle Spike's converts! "You killed him before the train started?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes, brother. At the moment, I hadn't a thing to do. He was sitting there, and I thought that I might just as well get it over with. It was just five minutes after four, to be exact."

"But why? He wasn't an artist of any kind, was he?"

"Yes," said the conductor quietly, "he was. At least, he *said* he was. He was always talking about his poems. He lives in my town, and he's known there as the 'Farmer Poet.'"

"Not Ben Flaxstone?" cried Enright. "He's no genius. He's a literary joke! Why, his work is accepted by all the magazines! He's a kind-hearted, stupid old chap. Can't you tell by his face?"

The conductor removed his cap and scratched his head thoughtfully. His broad, honest face wore a look of genuine regret. "That's a shame!" he said at length. "But he was always saying he was a genius. How was I to know that he lied? That isn't what I joined the brotherhood for—killing poets. Inventors are more in my line. But I worked for Mr. Abbottsfield once, and he treated me mighty white. Knowing of the interest he took in poets, I thought that this was kind of paying him back."

"But you haven't killed a poet!" cried Enright. "You've killed a poor old doddering fool!"

"So you say, sir," the official muttered sadly. "What a mistake to make! But what was I to think? Wasn't he always telling me he was a poet? And I did it only out of consideration for Mr. Abbottsfield. I came in and saw the old bird sitting there, and I says to myself: 'Henry, here's your chance to please your old boss.' So I creeps up behind him, and lets him have it under the third rib; and he just kind of sighs and drops his head back."

"You've killed a very good old man."

"Yes, he was kind-hearted, seemingly. Well, I've got to get rid of the body before we reach East New York. The brothers

might not like my making a mistake. Will you give me a hand with it? We can sling it off the back platform—there's nobody to see us."

Overton shuddered. "No, I think not," he said weakly. "I can't stand the sight of blood. I'm going up to have a smoke." He hastened down the passageway and into the smoking compartment.

"All right, suit yourself!" the conductor shouted angrily. "I think you're—"

The official's words were drowned out by the slamming of a door. Enright had shut himself in. Sinking into the nearest seat, he put both thumbs into his ears and waited.

And for a long time there was silence, except for the rumbling of the train over the tracks, the rattling of the window-panes in their sockets. At last Overton heard the sound of something heavy being dragged along the floor, a low voice muttering complaints, and then a grunt and a dull thud. The young man realized that the farmer poet had been thrown out upon the road like a bundle of wet hay, and he thought: "Thus is he paid who attempts to wear a crown too heavy for his brow."

The train shrieked in triumph and sped on.

"East New York," the conductor shouted, opening the door of the smoking-compartment. Evidently the official had regained his good humor. He smiled at Overton and winked his left eye. "If any of the brothers get on here," he said in a low voice, "don't mention my mistake."

"I won't," said Enright, glancing covertly at the murderer's face. "You can trust me."

"Thanks."

The conductor's head vanished, the door closed. Now the young man could feel that the train was coming to a halt. The revolutions of the wheels grew slower, the rattling of the window-panes ceased altogether. A moment later the brakes were applied; and the car, trembling like a frightened horse, bolted forward for a few more yards, and then became stationary. This was the first stop of the journey.

Overton looked out of the window, as a child peers between the curtains of his

bed at midnight. On his face was the terror-stricken look of one who expects to see something supernatural. Here, some of the Millionaires' League might be waiting. He was prepared to see the platform crowded—a multitude of white spats and white waistcoats.

Nothing of the kind was visible. Two or three indistinct figures moved about beneath the arc-light. None of them in any way resembled Uncle Spike, Abbotsfield, or Turveydown. Evidently, for the remainder of the journey, he would be in comparative safety. He let his head fall back against the cushion and closed his eyes. Now he could snatch an hour's sleep without risking his life and the lives of his three friends. As for the conductor, he had no fear of him. The man, thanks to the uniform of the Millionaires' League, thought him a member; and, even if he did not, the murderous mistake which he had already committed would make him hesitate before taking another chance.

"All aboard!"

The train groaned like a sorely driven beast, and lumbered slowly forward.

CHAPTER XIII.

DANGERS BY THE WAY.

OVERTON felt that he was drifting away on the soft, languorous sea of oblivion. Sleep was claiming him for her own. He was no longer in the smoking compartment, but on the sand with his father. It was night, and the surf was breaking on the shore with a dull rumbling as of heavy wheels. He was looking up at the sky, and at the stars which lay strewn upon it like jewels on velvet.

Suddenly his father said: "Be careful, Enright—He will see you!" And then he knew that they were not all stars, as he had imagined, but that two of them were eyes—eyes that glared down upon him. He must escape before it was too late. He knew that these eyes had already found him out. They were growing more intense, moment by moment. He tried to look down, but he could not; he tried to run, but his feet seemed to have taken root in

the sand. "You will die when you see the face," his father murmured softly; "you will die when you see the face!"

Then the young man, with a great effort, threw off his nightmare. Even in this cavern of sleep he felt that something from the land of reality threatened him. The eyes, which had at first seemed stars, suddenly grew small and human. Enright raised his head and saw that a man was sitting opposite him in the smoking-compartment, and that this man was regarding him with a certain stony intentness.

Gigantic and sinister, a monstrous mountain of flesh stirred by some hidden flame, Peter Pottingham, one of the billionaire leaders, sat with his triple chin resting on his ponderous palms. And as he sat thus, like some grotesque figure of putty, he seemed quite lifeless in the sickly light of day which sifted through the window. The night before, in the council chamber, he had seemed, for all his fat, alive. Now he looked like some inanimate thing that had never lived. Even the crimson of his bulbous cheeks seemed to have been slapped on carelessly with a brush. Were it not for his narrowed eyes, which flashed like slits in a furnace door, one could not imagine hot life stirring there.

And this silent figure was terrible to Overton. It symbolized for him all that was gross and stupid in the world—it conjured up orgies where men and women sat at groaning banquet-boards stuffing themselves with food and drink until their skins, growing thin and shiny, finally broke like inflated paper bags—it reminded him that, while all mankind may be subject to the sins of the flesh, this financier, being so afflicted, must have double the sins as he had double the flesh. He might have pitied Peter Pottingham had he not loathed him.

"I didn't know any one was here," said Overton, dropping his eyes to the billionaire's ankles which bulged out above his spats.

"You were asleep, brother," said Peter Pottingham in a squeaky voice, which reminded one of air escaping from an inflated balloon. "I got on the train at East New York."

"Oh, I see." Overton had an uncomfortable feeling that he had made a fool of himself. He was unpleasantly conscious that those narrowed eyes, embedded in rolls of fat, were still boring into him.

For several moments there was a brooding silence. Enright turned his face toward the window to escape Peter Pottingham's scrutiny. Suppose that the billionaire should recognize him as the spy who had escaped! With a beating heart, he looked out at the country through which they were gliding.

Over the fields, still brown and wintry, white waves of mist rolled sullenly. The trees, holding out their long, bare branches, seemed to be plodding stolidly along with downcast heads. Everything was vague and ghostly. The young man caught a glimpse of the sky. Pale and lifeless, it hovered over the world like a cold, damp sheet. It was that hopeless hour when it is neither day nor night, when the smoke of the battle has not been blown away.

"I have seen you somewhere before," said Peter Pottingham suddenly. "Where was it? Ah, where was it?" He put his flabby hand up to his eyes with a weary gesture.

"At one of the meetings, perhaps," suggested Overton.

"Undoubtedly," murmured the billionaire. "But I can't remember at which. You are one of our poorer brothers, are you not?"

"Yes."

"So I thought," said Peter Pottingham with a sigh. "My eyes have been bothering me lately. Everything is going to pieces—everything!" He was silent for a moment, breathing so heavily that one of the buttons on his white waistcoat popped off and rolled on the floor. Beads of sweat stood on his forehead. He looked about him on all sides, as though he had lost his voice and were searching for it.

The young man moved his feet about restlessly. He felt as though he were lying helpless in the cage of some vicious but absent-minded elephant. At any moment this gigantic beast might remember and trample on him. He murmured something and started to rise.

"Just a moment," said the financier wistfully. "You interest me—I want to talk to you. How does it come about that you joined us, *you* who are so delightfully thin? That shabby waistcoat, those disreputable spats, are the insignia of contentment, of poverty."

"Yes," Overton muttered, flushing, "I *am* thin and poor."

"Then, how comes it, brother, that you throw away all the joys of such a happy lot to cast your die with us? Surely such a splendid thinness and shabbiness should have made you hesitate before joining a miserable company of millionaires, a handful of unhappy, embittered slaves. What reasons had you, brother?" Peter Pottingham drew out a handkerchief as large as a napkin, and blew his nose solemnly. Then, pushing his head forward like a charging bull, he waited patiently.

Enright hesitated. What could he say to convince the billionaire? The lips of his imagination were sealed. Groping for words, he glanced at his traveling companion with that instinctive tremor with which nerves face matter.

"Won't you confide in me, brother?" the financier said sadly.

Suddenly Overton began to speak. Words leaped from his mouth with surprising ease. It was just as though a phonograph in his breast had been wound up and started. And everything that he said, when he came to look back on it, cast a shadow of truth.

"Life is a disappointment to me, because life is a mirage. For years I have been wandering in the desert. I have been thirsty, hot, and tired—but is *that* life? Over the brow of that hill is a pond; over the pond, palms stretch their branches. It is cool and restful. The shadows that I see from the desert *here* are not shadows—they are realities.

"It is terrible for me to think that these, which must always be shadows to me, are realities to others. If it were not for the pond, the palms, the shadows, the heat of the desert would not torture me so. Ambition lashes me over the sand, and will lash

me till I die. Ambition has painted this mirage. Who has created ambition? Him will I strike. Genius has created ambition by gazing into the pond. Her face I see reflected in the still water under the palms; her thoughts are the shadows which play about the dark tree-trunks. And so I came to join the Millionaires' League."

Peter Pottingham shook his large head as he said: "I'm afraid I don't quite understand."

Overton laughed a trifle bitterly. "I am a critic," he said, "and to rend and tear come naturally to the critic. We are always looking across the sand at the mirage. It embitters us. We are so near, and yet so far away."

"Oh," said the billionaire dubiously.

For a moment there was silence, broken only by the rattling of the train over the tracks. The young man looked out of the window. The sky was growing brighter. It glowed faintly like mother-of-pearl. The countryside was losing its unearthly look. Gradually the white vapor was evaporating, like frost on a window-pane. Cattle were grazing on a field near the tracks. A large brindle bull raised its head, and, staring at the passing train, shook it violently. This bull reminded Enright forcibly of his traveling companion. They both had the same expression.

Overton suddenly felt a burning curiosity concerning Peter Pottingham. What could have persuaded such a stupid man to take up arms against genius? Certainly *he* could never be made to know that he was bored. It was worth finding out. The sensation, which caused such a fat and lazy man to forego the pleasures of bed for vengeance, must be supernaturally intense. Turning toward the billionaire, Enright said:

"Now won't you tell me how *you* happened to join the brotherhood?"

Peter Pottingham's bloated face brightened. Evidently he had been waiting for this.

"With the greatest pleasure," he said in the tone of a man who loves to talk about himself.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the conclusion of this story without waiting a month.



The Patteran

by
Dixie Willson

BOSHAAT lay by the fire-hole asleep, breathing heavily. I lay by the fire-hole, too, but I had not been sleeping. I thought Hagar's long, black hair looked like a snake coiling across her arm. The ground and the air were cold with dew, and down by the road I saw the morning coming.

Boshaat was stupid with drink. I shivered and drew myself closer together. I was afraid of Boshaat, and I was afraid of cold, gray morning—gray, awful morning, with neither moon nor sun—neither light nor shadow. It seemed full of all the dead things, and all the lonesomeness and fearfulness of the whole world.

Hagar's hands were very white between the scarlet of her apron and the gray of everything else. They still held her tam-bourine, and I knew she couldn't have moved all night long, because the dew had gathered in heavy drops upon its copper rim. Her eyes, wide and steady with deep, deep darkness, never moved from the fire, where just a few sparkish, blinking ashes were left. I was afraid of a dead fire, too.

Boshaat's arm flung lumpishly sideward, along a smoldering log. In a flash Hagar started up, drew away his hand, wiped it on her apron, and put it softly at his side again. Then, taking her shawl from her shoulders, she covered him—and kissed him. When she bent to do it, I saw, on her bare neck, the mark of where he had struck her. My fingers shut tight, and I sat up.

Hagar heard me move and turned quickly. The hand striking the fire had stirred a bit of it to light, and in the glow on Hagar's face I saw tears. I drew myself to her feet, and put my arms around her knees. My eyes and my hands were hot with hatred—and love.

"Mother," I said, "why don't you kill Boshaat?"

"I will, son," she answered softly, freeing my arms and crouching beside me; "some day I will."

Sarki and Long John were hunting. In the deep of the woods we could hear them calling the dogs.

And so we sat until Brenda came out to stack the fire-hole for the morning mushrooms. Brenda's skin was very old—like leaves dried in the sun—and her teeth were old, too, like sun-colored clam-shells. She was very good. For twenty-seven years she had taken care of Hagar, and for twelve years she had taken care of me. She was my grandmother.

The morning was flickering with light now, and I was no longer afraid of it. I sat up and stood up and stretched me, and poured a bucket of water over my head. Then I heard Brenda.

She was saying nothing, but making a queer noise with her throat, as though a feeling which could find no words for itself was speaking just the same. It was a snarl and a cry and a breath of rage and a breath of love. There seemed to be too many

words in what she said instead of none at all. She had put down her mush-pots, and stood holding back Hagar's loose collar, where, blotched against her white neck, were the purple finger-prints of that dog, Boshaat! I shook the water out of my eyes, and walked around the fire-hole and kicked him. I was sorry I had no boots. I kicked him twice. Then Brenda stopped me. Hagar got up and put her arm around my shoulders. "Come in the wagon and sleep," she said. So we left him there; left Brenda making fire, and went in the wagon to bed.

Hagar was very, very tired, and slept at once. I watched her, and thought about killing Boshaat. That he was my father made no difference. I hated his rough hands just the same. That he was handsome made no difference, too. I hated his black eyes and laughing mouth, drinking and singing good-fellowship from the time he soused his head cool in the morning until he fell into a drunken sleep at night.

He wore earrings that clicked when he walked. His hair was black and thick and a bit curly. He owned no hat. His thumb was the best word for good mare-flesh among a hundred; and when he'd swing down the alley of a horse-fair, every trader knew him for a thoroughbred.

The horse-fair kept my mother happy, because every day he took her, and made himself the ace of the day with her beauty. He danced with her, a whirling, Serbian dance, with a tambourine and castanets; and he'd throw her and catch her, and hold her and kiss her, and they'd whirl and drop and sing and smile; and then she'd come to me with her eyes shining, and say she was sure Boshaat would never strike her again. Every day she'd say it; but every night when he came into camp with a trade gone wrong or a filly lost by the dice, or too much drink to burn him, his anger blasted out to Hagar, and my heart panted and tore to beat him dead. I thought of it all as I watched her.

Her hair was damp black around her tired, too white face, and a little bit of sunshine through a hole in the canvas came along her throat where the heart-beats were throbbing above the angry, blotching

bruise. Through the open cover I could see Boshaat, his shoulders still tucked over with her shawl. All the wagons were waking now, the men already at their dough-balls, and Lois washing. Marcia slumped to the pot with her baby's mush-cup, saw Boshaat, and looked along for Hagar. When I saw her coming toward the wagon, I lifted Hagar's thick braid from her shoulder, and dropped it over the bruise.

Long John and Sarki had come in, and outside I could hear the dogs whining to be fed.

Just after noon Boshaat woke in good spirits. He called me to catch the horses up and douse them while he trimmed his face. Nine were going to the fair. I roped them to the thicket and went to waken Hagar. But at the wagon-door Boshaat caught up with me, and swinging me head down over his shoulder, strode back to the fire-hole. Then he swung me forward and held me facing him. "You leave your mother sleep," he said; "leave her sleep as long as she will; and when she won't, tell her your father did not go to the fair to-day."

So I went back to the thicket and braided tails. When I finished, Boshaat was standing by the fire-hole laughing with Long John about one he had traded for two the day before.

"And I can get five for the dapple," said John. Boshaat bent his face to John's, squinted his eyes shut, and put a finger on John's nose. "Not the dapple," he said through his teeth. "By the Lord Harry, I'll stick the man as trades the dapple. Nothing but cash for she, and plenty of it, too; and mine, what's more."

I turned to look at the mare he was telling of, and saw Hagar standing beside me. Her braids were fresh and smooth. She had on all her prettiest beads, and her tambourine was ribboned for the dance. Then Boshaat saw her, too.

"I'm not going to the fair to-day," he said, and gave her a rough, gay kiss; "so coddle your son at home."

He loosed the horses, and we watched Long John and Sarki lead them down the road, Boshaat loafing along after. Then I held my hands to catch my mother's beads as she took the strings off one by one.

Two hours before sunset, when all was quiet, when the camp was alone but for Brenda picking bead patterns and Marcia fretting her yellow-headed baby to sleep, Long John came up through the woods with a stranger. They stopped where the horses were stamping and sneezing at the stinging blue-flies, and the stranger ran his hand several times over the dapple's pretty back. "Yes, I'll pay five hundred dollars for the mare," he said. "My name is Arthur Brogan."

Then he saw Hagar and smiled at her. Marcia put down her baby, tied on her scarlet handkerchief, and came up gaily; but Arthur Brogan saw only Hagar, and presently he sat down by her, and asked a fortune or a song. She laughed, gave him both, held her apron for the coins, and waved at him when he and Long John went off toward the road.

"So Boshaat didn't want you at the fair to-day!" Marcia said spitefully.

"Boshaat did not go to the fair to-day," Hagar answered.

"Ugh! don't be a fool!" laughed Marcia, shrugging her shoulders. "He did go. He's tired of you, that's all."

In all my life I had never seen Hagar's beautiful eyes with anger in them; but now she turned to Marcia with eyes like a storm.

"Boshaat — did — not — go — to — the — fair — to-day," she said very slowly, and, picking up my hand, she walked away toward the wagon.

We met Long John coming back from the road. Over his arm was a gay blanket. "That's pretty," I said. "Where did you get it?"

"I guess it's yours," he laughed, tossing it over my shoulder. "Boshaat won it this afternoon at the horse-fair."

Hagar gripped my fingers sharply, then went on. I dropped the blanket in the fire-hole and followed her.

When the next noon-time came and Boshaat once more told Hagar that he need not take her, that he would not be going to the fair, she put her hands to his face and made him look at her.

"Well then," she said, "now is twice;

but some men never go at all. Palrico has not been for a year!"

"Palrico!" Boshaat laughed. "Palrico is dead!"

"So he is!" said Hagar, laughing, too, "and his widow finds him better company than before!"

Then Boshaat saw the red on her neck. "Is that my mark?" he asked. He took her hands from his face and held her wrists till her fingers shut. Their eyes looked straight at each other for a long time; then he let her go, rubbed over the bruise like to brush it off, stuck his hands in his pockets, and walked away. When he came to where I was sitting, he laughed and cuffed me over on the ground. "Your father's a bad 'un, ain't he?" he said.

When the men had gone and the women were sleeping, Brenda sent me to fish for supper. I found a good hole, and was bringing in well when I heard a horse splashing in the water. I looked toward the ford, and there I saw the dapple, loose and making across-creek. I dropped my line and ran along the bank, but when she got to the other side, I saw that she was not alone. Hagar had the halter, leading across the space of scrubby wood into the road.

While I was wondering about it I heard some one speaking.

"Gipsy boy," I heard, "will you fill this for me?" And when I turned to look I saw a little girl with long, yellow curls and a white, white dress and blue-silk stockings and a silver cup. I filled it and she went away. So I forgot about Hagar and the dapple. I thought how that had sounded, her voice saying: "Gipsy boy"—like little seeds with white, soft wings that come floating along in the wind.

After a while I saw that I had twice the fries that Brenda wanted, so I threw some back and took the rest home. Hagar was there, combing her hair on the wagon-step.

When the sun was half past four, Hagar put on her beads and went away. She didn't ask me to go, but I *did* go, and she didn't care. She said she was going to the horse-fair.

It was the day for cock fights, and everything was very gay. A band, and number-wheels, and sausage-mills, and candy-carts,

and horses by hundreds. Hagar loved the fun of it, and her face was so bright, she looked like bands and flying ribbons her very self!

At the far end of the alley was a pavilion for dancing and drinks where Hagar wanted to go. There were so many people around that she could not see, but she helped me up on a post, and told me to look sharp so I could tell her just how lovely it was. After a while we went back along the course and out in the road again. When we were nearly home she asked me to tell her all I had seen. So I told her plenty—of the flags and plumes, and the game-cocks in pens, and the girls and men dancing—

"And Boshaat?" she asked.

"My father was not there," I told her. She stopped in the road and looked at me.

"Jan," she said, "did you see *all* the men who were there?"

"Yes," I told her; "every one."

"And not Boshaat?" she asked, shutting her fingers on my shoulders till they seemed to come together through my bones.

"No," I said. "Boshaat was not there."

Then we went along. After a while she stopped again. "Jan," she said, "he *was* there. I saw him myself."

"Why, you couldn't have seen him!" I said, surprised, "because he was beyond the crowd and around the corner!"

Then Hagar laughed, and turned into the grass by the road and sat down. I picked a wild-rose and sat down beside her.

"I saw him without looking," she said. "Now tell me all about it." So I did, though I had been bound she shouldn't know. Told her how he had been dancing with the yellow girl, throwing her and catching her, dropping her and kissing her. Before I finished Hagar cried out sharply.

"There's a thorn in my foot!" she said.

I found it and brought it out. It was a thorn that had been on my wild-rose, and I couldn't understand how it could have got so far into her foot.

I never finished the story about Boshaat. When trampers began to come by from the fair we went into the woods, and home.

When we got back Marcia came running with eyes like a cat at night to tell us that the dapple had been stolen.

"What of Boshaat?" she shrilled. "Boshaat will go crazy!"

"Leave the news till morning," Hagar said, "and I do not think it will bother him."

"Do you think the mare will come back by morning?" Sarki sneered. "Nobody dares leave the news any more than they dare tell it!"

"And mark me," Marcia broke in, "if he ever gets hand on the hound as took her, he'll break bones all right!"

Of course I thought at once of Hagar and the ford, and I had to bite my tongue to keep from crying out my fear. I knew well enough Marcia was right. Boshaat *would* go crazy. Why had Hagar dared touch the dapple, and what had she done with it? I clutched her away from Marcia and Sarki and all their mumbling of what would happen, and begged her, whispering, to let me get it home again.

Much surprised, she put a hand over my mouth, and asked if any one else had seen. I told her no; and then she whispered back to me that there was a good reason why Boshaat was not going to care at all, and so we would both go right to sleep and forget about it. But I couldn't forget. Thoughts of it frightened me, so that I pulled the blanket over my head. And what could Hagar have done with the dapple, anyway?

I don't know whether I went to sleep or not, but after a while I felt a hand on my face—Hagar's hand; and then her lips along my cheek.

"Jan," she whispered, "wake up and come out, but don't talk."

When I sat up I saw that it was just turning morning, the time that always made me so fearful. Hagar's hair was tied tight to her head, and her shawl pinned at her neck. She was pawing a hole in the ground, and when I saw what she put into it, I almost cried out loud. It was Boshaat's fish-knife—and it was bleeding.

We crawled along the ground, almost without breathing—crawled half-way to the road, and then ran. The sky was dead and cold. Gray and dead and cold with early, awful morning. When we could run no longer, we walked.

After some minutes, Hagar stopped at a turn like a lane and went into the brush. When she came out the dapple was with her. Still without a word we went on. The dust was heavy under my toes. We passed the tents of the horse-far, as gray and dead as everything else. Just beyond them a man was waiting in the road. It was Arthur Brogan.

He gave Hagar some money, patted her shoulder, and told her he hoped she would find what she was going after. She thanked him, tied the mare to the fence, put the money in her dress, and we went along.

"What *are* you going after?" I asked her.

"I don't know," she said, whispering. "I don't know."

We passed farmhouses and barns and sheep pastures—all still and gray, and after a while we came to the town. Here lights were lit on street corners, but even the lights looked cold and thin and frightful.

In the middle of the town men here and there looked at us queerly; but we hurried along, and when we saw a station ahead with a shuffling engine on the track, Hagar snatched my hand and we ran.

She bought tickets to somewhere, and we went away on the train.

The track went back through the horse-fair and by the camp. Hagar put her face tight to the window, and when we purred past, I saw Brenda at the fire-hole beating the morning mush-pots, and my string of fish caught up at the side of the wagon.

When six months had gone we were living in two high rooms in a tall house in a city by the California hills. Hagar coiled her hair on top of her head, and made bead patterns and baskets, and I crowded my feet into shoes and squirmed through the streets and sold them.

We were lonely, and Hagar's eyes seemed always to be afraid of things—of the closeness of the walls, and the great, big, growling, smoky voice of everything around us. Of course we had heard nothing of our people, and often we wondered together about Sarki and Brenda and Long John and Lois, and if the yellow-headed baby could walk alone, and if the leaky bottom of the bait-pail had finally broken through.

At the end of every day we went to the flat roof, and breathed a little, and talked about how the sunset would be looking, shadowing the trees and the river, out beyond the walls and streets and chimneys.

Once I asked her if she would not be happier wearing her red apron again; but she said no, that it was put away on too high a shelf.

One day Michael Beaver came to live in the room at the end of the hall, and when he had been there a month he loved Hagar.

Michael was an iron-worker, and strong and fine. He sat with us on the roof every evening, and pointed out the black brick-pits where he lived all day. His voice was big and slow and gentle, and his eyes were blue, and after he came we were not so lonely.

One night Hagar wore a string of beads, and when Michael asked her where she got them, she told him of our trails on the long road, and of the sweet-smelling camp-fires; and then her eyes blazed into snapping stories of the horse-fairs, and she laughed and sang as I thought she had forgotten how to do!

"That's the world!" she cried, throwing back her head and reaching to the little patchy piece of night that came over our roof; "that's the world, Michael Beaver."

Michael Beaver tipped back in his chair and smoked his pipe and watched her queerly, then he swung his arm slowly around to the howling chimneys of the smelting-hole, and the tall, tight buildings everywhere. "Why, here's the world right here," he said. "Outside of this is—nothing."

But Hagar laughed and shook her head. "This the world?" she cried. "Why, what's here is just a scar on its beautiful body!"

The way Michael Beaver watched her made me think of Sarki's mastiff the day he had first seen a June bug.

One night, when it was raining and we did not go to the roof, Michael asked her to marry him, and suddenly tears came rolling down her cheeks till she couldn't stop them. He laughed and held her head against his shoulder, and I heard his big,

quiet voice saying that he knew her heart was tired.

I was in the inside room, but I was not asleep, and the door was open.

"No," Hagar said, "you can't marry me. I wish I had sent you away long ago. You don't know anything about me, and you can't marry me."

Michael turned her head till her face was looking straight into his. "I don't want to know anything more about you than that I love you," he said in his slow, kind way, and then he kissed her.

Hagar took one step backward into my room and closed the door between them. Then she stood straight and stiff with her back against it.

The door was in the square of moonlight. Her hands and face, flat against the back of it, were so white and so moveless, and her eyes so deep and steady, that I was almost afraid of her.

For two days Michael Beaver did not come. When it was three, Hagar stood at the window and looked down into the thick mesh of the streets. "I wonder what has become of the summer?" she said.

"She means what has become of Michael Beaver," I thought. So I found him, and told him she was lonely, and that night he came back.

He told her he had been given work in a larger smelter in Potosi, and was going the next day. He said he wanted to tell her once more that he loved her, and asked her to come to him, and begged her not to cry again.

"No, I won't cry," she said; "but you don't know me, and I can't come to you. I can't marry you."

"But whatever it is about you that I don't know, doesn't make any difference," Michael Beaver said quietly, "when I love you."

He tried to take her hands, but she put them behind her, against the wall, and cried that he must not touch them.

Then suddenly she laughed sharply and said: "One night, a little while ago I killed Jan's father. So now go away to Potosi and take your love with you."

For a long time there was no sound at all. Then Michael Beaver said in his same

quiet way: "I will take my love with me, if she'll go."

Before he left, Hagar had promised. She was to meet him in Potosi on the first day of September.

So the room at the end of the hall was closed, and Michael Beaver went to Potosi.

When he went away he kissed Hagar, and told her he would have everything ready—a little cottage close to the factory, he said—and they'd promised us a garden!

It was August. Hagar smiled and sewed and made ready to go; and sometimes I came home and found her singing. "Michael is so good," she said over and over. "Think, Jan, we will never be alone again!"

The afraid look went away from her eyes, and I was glad. It was as though she had found that she could shut all those other days together like a jointed telescope, and put them away in a closed case.

Then one day when I came along the streets I saw an old woman following me. It was Brenda! I stopped, frightened, and she came up to me. Her skin was older than ever, and her face was streaked with dusty tears. She went home with me, and Hagar cried out loud with fear and joy.

Brenda said our people had come into town, and that she had seen me and schemed to leave them.

"But I'll go along to-night," she said, "and you needn't fear my telling a word of you."

She kissed us over and over and patted our hands and our faces, and laughed and cried with joy.

"We ha' no blame that you leaved Boshaat," she said, in her teary old voice; "but he pines for you much."

A china cup crashed to the floor. Hagar was so white I held my breath.

"Is—is Boshaat still—there?" she asked.

Old Brenda nodded. "Yes," she said. "But he ain't so handsome. The night you leaved, he rolled upon his fish-knife, he telled us, and it seamed him deep. But don't be so afeared! He'll never know nothin' of where you are from *me*."

Then Hagar began to walk around and around the room, as though the walls of it choked her, and she told the truth about

how we had left Boshaat, and about Michael Beaver—who would be waiting to marry her on the first day of September—with a cottage ready and a garden promised!

"Well," said Brenda, nodding her gray old head, "you're free to go. That y' loved Boshaat once, binds you nowise. That makes for nothin' when a good man loves y' now, and wants y', knowin' all."

The wagons were stopping for a one-night fair, Brenda said, on their way to Monterey—to Monterey to camp through the blazing winter carnivals. No one must suspect that she had seen us; so as soon as it was dark she blessed us with many prayers and tears, and went away.

In the night I wakened and missed Hagar. The door was open. I ran into the hall. The door up-stairs was open. I ran up-stairs, and up and up till I came out on the roof, and there I saw Hagar with her red apron on, and her moccasins, and her beads. She was humming the song of the Serbian dance, and moving her body as she sang.

I saw a blaze of light outside the town, and then my heart jumped wild, for flaring along on the wind came little flashes of the brass music of a horse-fair.

I ran to Hagar and pulled her to the rail, where we could see it and hear it and feel it. We watched until the music stopped and the lights began to go out. Then suddenly Hagar snatched my arm, and leaned far out into the night.

"Do you hear it?" she whispered. "Sarki and Long John are hunting! In the hills I can hear them calling the dogs!"

Hagar never spoke of Boshaat again, nor of Brenda; and one day I found the rim of her tambourine and the coins of her apron and some of her beads—in the fire.

Word came often from Michael Beaver. The cottage was ready, he said, and the garden just as promised, with four chickens to feed in it! Hagar never wearied of saying how good he was. And her fingers flew faster with the sewing. Towels and sheets, and blue strips for the windows; and finally it was the last day of August, and the boxes were packed, and our two rooms all ready to close.

"We'll go to the station to-night for our tickets," Hagar smiled, as she counted coins into her purse.

When we got there the people were crowding and hurrying and laughing, carrying bundles with bits of colored flags flying, and bright clothes popping through, and they crowded us into the midst of it before we knew. We felt the breath of a holiday, and held tight to each other's hands, and watched and wondered about it.

When the train came, men with blue coats on tried to hurry the people on, to get them out of the station, and help them get started right.

I begged Hagar that we might watch the train, so we pushed along with the others till the sneezing, grumbling thing was right beside us.

It coughed and jerked and swung its bell, and at last every one had tumbled into it, and we were standing alone.

Then one of the blue-coats came hurrying toward us.

"Here!" he called, snatching at Hagar's arm. "Aren't you going to Monterey?"

Hagar looked at him stupidly, and from her face any one might have thought the world had stopped beating.

"I say!" the man shrilled again. "Aren't you going to Monterey?"

Still she stared; then suddenly her eyes flashed as though some one had lit a torch behind them. She threw back her head, smacked her hands together, whisked me under her arm, and ran across to the train.

"Yes!" she cried. "Yes—to Monterey!"

And when the train, full of laughing people, went out of that city, we were on it.

"Mother!" I said, feeling all amazed. "Mother, where are we going?"

We hummed along, 'way out into the open country before she answered.

"We're going back to the camp-fire and the air and the clear sky and the horse-fair—and Boshaat," she laughed; "back to the patteran!"

I thought of Michael Beaver; but I knew, if he loved her, he could want no more than to have her happy. And now her eyes were alive with more happiness than I had ever seen before—flashing as though some one had lit a torch behind them!

White Tigers

by Perley Poore Sheehan.

Author of "The Three Elks," "The Whispering Chorus," "God's Messenger," etc.

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

IN the Bayou Pochette, midway between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, lived Fang Shu, shrimper and poetic philosopher; also in a way he was a faunal naturalist. To him all Caucasians were "white tigers"; not that he hated them in the least—they merely interested him. So when a new specimen—a young female, Elizabeth Valladon—came to visit her uncle, Major Floyd Valladon, it was natural that his interest should lead him to watch her. But even after she had saved him from fish pirates and had told him that she had been born in China, the daughter of an American missionary, he did not think it necessary to tell her that he himself came from that part of the world, and that it had been her father whose description of the Bayou Pochette had been responsible for his coming to America. When he learned, however, that she was going back to China he insisted on her accepting a small jade talisman with curious Chinese lettering on it.

Beyond this he showed no outward interest in her, but he watched, nevertheless, the growing love affair between her and Gerard Colton, the young son of a neighbor; nor did he miss the vague, subtle threat of another white tiger, a shrewd but low-caste white man named Noah Kregg. And when in the mystic silences of the almost tropical forests around the Bayou Pochette the pure young love of Elizabeth and Jerry grew and ripened to its fruition, Fang Shu knew—and he knew that the serpent in the Eden—Noah Kregg—also knew.

Then one day, after a meeting in their bower in the woods, a rifle-shot echoed on the stillness, and for Jerry life faded out forever. No one knew who did it—no one but Fang Shu, and he, uncompromising fatalist, said nothing. Elizabeth, broken and dazed, but obliged by circumstance to conceal her grief, sought safety in flight, and within a few days sailed for China. On the steamer she made only one real acquaintance, Guy la Salle, a man whose life, like her own, was under the shadow of an early mistake. In China, at her father's mission, forty miles from Peking, Elizabeth confessed all to her mother, and she—good woman and true—understood, and the girl was sent away to the mountains—for her health—under the care of a Chinese lady, a friend of Mrs. Valladon, Mrs. Wu. Here, in the shadow of the hills, while outside the Boxer uprising raged in all its terror, little Joy, protected by the jade charm given her mother by Fang Shu, was born.

It was a different world to which Elizabeth returned, months later. Both her father and mother had perished in the uprising, and she found that Mrs. Wu, shrewd and clever woman, had given out that Joy was the child of the murdered missionary and his wife; and so, as Elizabeth's sister, she appeared on the records. Alone in the great country, but not without friends, Elizabeth secured a mission school, and so seven peaceful years slipped by. In the mean time, though she had corresponded regularly with La Salle, and he had become in fact her dearest friend, she had not seen him—indeed, did not expect to.

Then one day he came.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THERE IS A LAND—"

"LET'S see! It has been—"

"Seven years," Elizabeth answered.

"Almost eight," La Salle calculated.

"Would you have recognized me—if I hadn't sent you the photograph?"

She studied him. She was on the point of telling him that he was younger. That

was all. She had remembered him as rather old, with that certain hardness in his face, that touch of gray at his temples. The gray was still there, but his face had softened even while it had taken on confidence—with the gentle tolerance that the greatest confidence gives. But she didn't tell him this.

"I should have known you anywhere!" she affirmed.

And La Salle was studying her. Her skin

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for October 19.

was never more transparently pure, responsively white and pink. Her eyes had lost that hunted look he remembered. They were tranquil, brilliant—as brilliant as her smile.

"I might have missed you," he passed judgment honestly. "I—I—somehow got it into my head that you were old and settled down."

"I'm both," she replied, pleased.

They were in the small parlor of Elizabeth's cottage. The black, native furniture of this heightened her blond beauty, as the ebony base increased the beauty of a pink bowl at her side. The window was open. She was one with the pink hollyhocks in the sunshine.

"Your letters were the letters of a philosopher," he remarked, evidently in some vague effort to elucidate his previous statement.

"You've been my teacher."

"If I've taught you anything," he replied, "it's because you've been my inspiration."

It was one of those statements which begin as a passing compliment, a mere incident of *répartée*, and which end by becoming an involuntary and explosive revelation. For a moment, it must have been in the purpose of each of them to disguise this, to gloss it over. The moment was a moment of hesitation. When this was passed it was too late. They still smiled, but they were a little less at their ease.

"As things go," said La Salle, steadily enough, "I've been fortunate—in other ways. I've told you how hard I've worked, how I've been getting—up and on—to peace and happiness—"

She gave him a sober smile.

"But I haven't touched on the material side very much," La Salle went on. He wasn't smiling. He was showing signs of some distress. He kindled in the consciousness of this. "I've been making money, too," he confessed. "I've saved up, without trying to, without thinking about it, yet with what I now know must have been a definite purpose."

He had been looking at the pink bowl while he spoke, as much as he might have been looking at anything. But now he

looked at Elizabeth again. He did this, one would have said, with a flash of surprise—surprise that he had got this far, surprise that he could have been so bold in the presence of a woman so young and so delectable.

As for Elizabeth, she must have known what was coming. Her own confusion must have been quite as great as was La Salle's. She saw in him a man still young—thirty-five, possibly thirty-six; agreeable; a man who had found himself, as she had found herself, this side of a tragic darkness. She merely concealed her feelings better. That was all. She leaned forward slightly. There was a soft yet shining smile on her face through which her eyes glistened.

La Salle had turned to her for help.

"Your letters have been very dear to me," said Elizabeth. "They have been to me all these years what your friendship was to that wretched little girl—whom you met—coming out to China."

She couldn't say even that much without those little pauses to take breath.

La Salle was helped.

"Marry me!"

His voice was a whisper, but it was a whisper of thunder.

Elizabeth closed her eyes and sank back in her chair, but her face was inclined forward, in the attitude of one who meditates, or listens to music, or prayer.

"It's for this that I came up here to see you," La Salle hurried on. "In every letter I've written you for the past year I tried to tell you that this was my hope. That's what I meant when I told you that you were my inspiration."

Elizabeth remained silent, motionless, but silent and motionless only in so much as the grosser forms of expression are meant. There was a quiver and a warmth about her. Her shut eyes and silent lips were eloquent of sympathetic feeling.

"We've both been out here long enough," La Salle urged, desperately. "This isn't our country. We're foreigners here. The United States is where we belong—you and I. America is our country. America needs us. We're her children. She'll be glad to have us back. She'll give us a home—in New York, or California, or both these places, or anywhere you say."

Elizabeth made an effort, spoke.

"But—but—all your interests out here?"

As if business mattered! She had merely intimated the question to prolong the situation. It was a cry for reprieve.

"I've sold out," La Salle answered gladly. Here he was on safe ground. "I've got between sixty and seventy thousand dollars in cash and the best sort of connections in the United States. Elizabeth"—he paused breathlessly—"that old affair of mine—the year I spent—"

"Guy! Don't! How can you?"

Elizabeth opened her eyes, sat forward. She rose as La Salle came to his feet, stepped toward her.

"I had no right," he began. "I'd taught myself to forget."

But Elizabeth stopped him with a gesture of her hands. He caught her hands in his.

"Right! Right!" she whispered in protest.

It was an allusion to her own past, and he comprehended it as such. There was nothing concealed between them. It was this quality that had rendered their correspondence so precious, and had drawn them more and more tightly to each other throughout these years that they had held aloof from a closer contact.

"Come back to the United States with me," he urged tumultuously. "That's our country. America! The land of pardon, hope! The dear old present land and future land!"

He made no effort to urge Elizabeth's physical surrender. He held her hands tenderly. Her head drooped near his face. She herself felt near the point of surrender. Her attitude indicated this. But it also indicated something else—something of womanhood stricken and wounded—and it was this that held La Salle in abeyance.

"The dear old present land and future land!"

La Salle's last words were still vibrating in the heavy silence of the room, and in the equally heavy, breathlessly waiting silence of their own souls, when there was borne in upon them from the garden a gust of childish talk and little shrieks of laughter. The talk was in Chinese. It sounded like a twitter of sparrows. The sounds receded

as Elizabeth looked up into La Salle's face. Not until then was he encouraged to put his arm about her.

He did no more than that.

Out of the diminished twitter of the human sparrows came a childish treble. The child sang in Chinese, to a Chinese song; and yet this song had something strangely familiar about it, even to La Salle—strangely suggestive of remote days of his own in that country of which he had just spoken.

"What is that song?" he asked.

Elizabeth had changed color slightly.

"An old hymn."

"Which?"

"'There is a land—of pure delight—'"

"I remember that," he whispered softly; "something about 'never withering flowers—'"

Elizabeth also whispered as she completed the stanza:

"'Death, like a narrow sea divides—this heavenly land from ours.'" The quotation was upon them like a sign. It gave them both a slight paroxysm of pain. "It's she who sings."

"The little sister?"

Elizabeth nodded, almost incapable of speech.

"Joy!" she said.

La Salle kissed her forehead. He kissed her cheek. He did this reverently. They knew each other so well that mere parley was not necessary between them. La Salle knew that he had received his answer. For the present he had. He could wait. He would wait.

Again that childish voice in the garden trilled up—an old hymn done into Chinese, like the destinies of so many of us.

There is a peculiarity of human intercourse which makes it appear at times as the vehicle of expression for some higher intelligence than that of mere humanity. Out of a chance remark comes some important hint as to what was theretofore doubtful or unknown. In words which convey the intent and purpose of the user of them lies a message of a greater intent and purpose to the one who listens.

There was this double significance for Elizabeth in that interview of hers with Guy La Salle.

To her woman's heart, this interview was as dear as interview could be. She cherished it. She was grateful for it. She was grateful to La Salle, and she cherished him with such honor and affection as only a woman can in such circumstances as were hers.

None the less, for a long time—always, perhaps—the chief purport of his remembered plea was not that he wanted her to be his wife. It was a revelation that her own destiny would take her back to America—that literally America was her destination. Around the half of the world she had not thus far traversed she drew an imaginary line. At times she sought to make it otherwise, but invariably this line came, as by a species of predestination, not only to America but to Bayou Pochette.

Elizabeth reflected on this while superintending the studies of her score of Chinese girls.

“‘Build thou—’” she recited aloud.

“‘*Build thou!*’” came the Chinese chorus in girlish voices.

“‘More stately mansions—’”

“‘*More stately mansions!*’”

Life was a nautilus-shell, with an ascending curve; but ever and again, the curve returned—not to its starting-point, but to a corresponding point on a higher plane. Thus only, some inner voice was patiently teaching her while she was teaching these others—thus only could she complete one cycle of existence and begin another. So would she have completed an orbit, be ready for a higher and wider flight. There might be many such orbits within a single life. She was only twenty-seven.

Joy smiled back at her.

Joy was in this class with the Chinese girls. Joy was otherwise gifted, but this was as good a way as any to keep her in sight, keep her out of mischief.

These sisters were inseparable. Their affection was beautiful to see. Sometimes Joy would break out right in class:

“Oh, Elizabeth—”

To the giggling amusement of the Orient-born, all of whom were aware that the elder Miss Valladon's silent dignity was a mere disguise of the schoolroom.

The sisters looked alike. The years which

separated them appeared not to be so very numerous. Joy was twelve and had attained a sapling stature. She had the same fluffy lightness and brightness of hair. Her face was inclined to a greater broadness than Elizabeth's; her jaw-bone was squarer; but there was that same diverting, fascinating, slightly Chinese tilt to her none-the-less-distractingly blue eyes.

A source of innocent merriment to a number of the girls who were of Manchu stock, hence with eyes as horizontal as any Caucasian's. A source of merriment and delight to Joy herself, who was not misnamed, who showed her tiny white teeth when she smiled, who loved all things Chinese and otherwise, and who sometimes teased Elizabeth by reading certain outrageous things from the red literature of the walls.

Elizabeth—and Joy, out of sheer charity—helped an old gentleman pack some Chinese porcelains and transcribe the items of a Chinese catalogue previously translated, and butchered, by an incompetent Hindu. They had met the old gentleman at a legation tea-party, and they helped him because he appeared to be rather poor.

The old gentleman was one of the curators of the British Museum, no less; and they learned this only when he invited Elizabeth to become his assistant in place of the disappointing Hindu.

The American ambassador himself congratulated Elizabeth and urged her to accept the offer.

Sir William poor? Not unless ten or twelve thousand a year spelled poverty. He dressed like a philosopher, that was all, and as one who had no soul for clothes, unless those clothes happened to be of the Ming Dynasty, which was his particular period.

London was on that imaginary orbit which Elizabeth had traced. London was almost “home.” So Elizabeth accepted the offer. In London she remained two years—while Joy learned the ways of English girls, and lost some of her Chinese in the acquisition of French; and Elizabeth herself learned many things—that brave outlook on life, for example, which demands that the dead past bury its dead, and that each day be granted a fresh sunrise.

A long two years of regeneration for Elizabeth these were. She told Guy La Salle as much by both the word direct and intimation in all the letters that she wrote to him.

He came all the way from San Francisco to see her. They met in the dull old drawing-room of the house on Brunswick Square.

"Not yet?" he asked.

She did not attempt to turn from him. She could meet his look bravely. But there were tears in her eyes as she smiled and shook her head.

Joy tapped on the door, came in to be presented.

"Fourteen—going on fifteen," she enlightened La Salle, with a cheerful acceptance of this as if it were an excellent joke.

She was full of little laughs and shivers, like a day in early spring, and was no less provocative of hungers, yearnings, songs, tickling restlessness, mad despair, joy of life. She was as tall as her mother.

"Pardon!" She gave La Salle a dazzling smile. "Good-by, Bess! I sha'n't be long."

She kissed Elizabeth, was gone again.

"Some day," La Salle said softly, "Joy will be getting married. Let you and I get married now. She'll have a father to guide her when the big event comes round."

"You know how I—do love and honor you—my friend—"

"Elizabeth, don't answer me until tomorrow. To-night, you and Joy and I will dine somewhere, take in a show afterward."

She smiled at him fondly. In spite of her own continued youth it was this boyish quality of his that made her feel almost as a mother to him at times.

"See," she said. "Give me your hand. You may kiss me if you wish. There, dear Guy. I told you not to come to London."

"I had to come—on business," he palpably lied.

"But, just now, I felt the old pain. It can't be—for your sake—so long as Joy is so much in my life."

Her eyes said the rest, and there La Salle read the rest.

The rest was this:

Had there been a living and exquisite diploma of that mistake he had made in his own youth, and of that year he had

passed in a cell, that diploma would have been in his own life, and in the life of the one who loved him, precisely what Elizabeth's daughter was in her life and in his. Joy was such a diploma.

That was the truth. That was what Elizabeth meant. The pain she had mentioned was a pain which he himself had given when he spoke of himself as a father to the girl.

It was a thought that gripped his throat. Yet he elaborated on it.

Out of that youthful mistake of his and his bitter year in prison there had come such a living diploma. It was not externalized. That was the only difference. Out of his suffering there had been born a spiritual instead of a physical child—yet no less surely another self than was Joy another Elizabeth.

Why should this birth be considered by the world as a disgrace? Why, when it was dear and beautiful to the parent, should it be a source of pain?

If La Salle had read Elizabeth's unspoken thought, she no less had followed his own. There was that sort of comprehension between them.

"But the day will come," he asserted, a smile breaking through.

"Yes!"

She had intended her answer to be a mere acquiescence, but she could not suppress the tenderness and the hope of her own that was in the monosyllable.

"I'll wait."

"But, oh, if some other woman should offer you happiness!"

"I'll wait, I tell you. You're coming home—our home."

CHAPTER XIV.

"NO. 2 KILLING."

WHEN New York's great art museum had completed negotiations for the transfer from London of an important collection of Chinese art objects and Elizabeth was chosen to go along as custodian, there was a solemn little celebration in the house on Brunswick Square. It was solemn so far, at least, as Elizabeth herself

was concerned. She had felt the subtle "drag" in that remark of La Salle's about her home-coming. Coming home she was.

Did it mean the eventual ending of the cycle, there where it had begun, at Bayou Pochette?

Her omniscient soul whispered, Yes.

From time to time Floyd Valladon had written her. The old gentleman was still living in the white house on the shore of the lagoon. Older now. There were times—principally Sunday afternoons—when she took out her package of letters from him and considered them.

There was that first letter of all he had written her immediately after he learned of the disaster in China. She could read the missive now with a degree of clairvoyance which she didn't then possess. Then she had read it as a mere duty-letter—kind enough, gallant enough, yet dictated out of love for her dead father rather than for herself. She saw it differently now. There had been love for herself in that letter. Also there had been a distress in it. Then she had interpreted this as the distress of an evil conscience. Not so, now. The distress had been just pure grief over the dictates of Providence—a distress all the greater in that these dictates and the consequences of them were none the less accepted bravely, face to the front, after the manner of a soldier.

Those Sunday afternoons had brought her to one solid, pure gold nugget of knowledge.

Not possibly could her Uncle Floyd have murdered Gerard Colton, shot him in the back, played the comedian afterward in those tragic, unforgettable moments when arrangements were making to bring in the body; later, on the witness stand; later yet, when she was preparing to flee from him.

She had wounded his sensitive pride. How young she had been!—how blind!

But Uncle Floyd also was growing older. He had written on an average of once a month ever since her own first letter in reply. Month by month she could see the handwriting change as month by month the face of some elderly person might change—an extra wrinkle here, an added hint of weakness there, an increased proneness to

flicker, go-dim. Month after month there was an increasing recurrence of small mistakes and repetitions.

Altogether the letters conjured up a portrait of the old gentleman.

Once he had been proud. Once he had been fierce. Now he was but the transparent shadow of pride and fierceness. Physical weakness, loneliness, heart-hunger—these had become the real though unadmitted agencies of his life.

But if Uncle Floyd had not killed Gerard Colton, who had? And what did the assassination have to do with their love in the Garden of Eden?

Out of the Garden of Eden Joy was born. Was the murder still to have some influence in that innocent child's life?

There was abundant reason why that little celebration of the forthcoming departure for America should be solemn so far as Elizabeth was concerned. While her face laughed there was a prayer in her heart. To the rippling music of the daughter who believed herself but a young and fortunate sister of an unaccountable "old maid," there was a foot-pedal surge of organ-music in the heart of the mother.

"An unaccountable 'old maid,'" for Elizabeth had not been without suitors during all these years. There were many of them—in the offing. If only a few of them had ever approached to the point of actual attack on Elizabeth's heart, it was certainly not because she did not appear to be a most delectable prize—gracious, as clean and fair as a tea-rose, earnest and devoted, with a sort of Leonardo da Vinci mystic lure about her.

It was a secret organ-music—now soft, now loud, now lulling, now swelling with stormy tumult—that was never quite absent from Elizabeth's inner and secret life, throughout that voyage of theirs across the Atlantic and into the crystal purity of an atmosphere like that on the top of the red hill in China. The air was like that the day they came up through New York Bay, typical of New York as she was afterward to learn. And thus even New York, with its million distractions, and its five million other molecules of humanity, was to show itself as but a small, component part in the

cosmic drama of which Elizabeth was the center; and New York was to keep the secret organ-music going as Bayou Pochette itself, or China, might have done.

Elizabeth, with sufficient salary and introduction to permit of it, put Joy into one of those schools near Fifth Avenue which promenaded their young ladies along that thoroughfare on pleasant afternoons, while she herself plunged deep into her work at the museum.

"Art," said one of the elderly scholars who occasionally visited Elizabeth during working-hours; "art is life crystallized."

"This collection," said Elizabeth, "is crystallized religion."

"Which is the preponderant element of life," the other returned, "to judge by the number of *cultus* objects in any art collection—gods, idols, saints, teachers, amulets."

"I myself carry an amulet," said Elizabeth, and she showed him the jade-charm Fang Shu had given her.

"Late Chinese," he commented. "What a tremendous place China has had in the life of the world! Greater generally than people are ready to admit. China sits like a Lord Buddha, unmoved, waiting, watching."

He passed on down the room, leaving behind him a quickened movement to the organ-music ever audible to Elizabeth's finer senses. She recalled Fang Shu. She wondered if he was still seated there—"like a Lord Buddha, unmoved, waiting, watching." So China sat now with the rest of the world flinging itself to the defense of all that religion stood for. Germany had assaulted from ambush something that the world had loved, as some one had assaulted that which she had loved. Was the God of the World in truth a mere Lord Buddha to sit there passive while wrong won its victories, arrogant and unavenged?

There were times, particularly when she and Joy were together on Fifth Avenue at some brilliant, crowded hour, when Bayou Pochette and China, and all the ultimate verities of life, seemed remote from even Elizabeth herself.

There was no doubt about it. Dress as they would, and conduct themselves as they would, people would stare at them—covertly, of course, and politely almost always.

Now and then some old boy, fresh from the hands of his valet in the later afternoon and on the way to his club, would sidle up if they paused at a show-window, as eager for a word or a smile or an equivocal glance as a puppy for a bone; but only now and then.

But out of all this glitter and show, the hard brilliance and beauty of so much of this human herd which was as if native—and probably was—to the hard brilliance and beauty of the New York atmosphere, there did evolve the conception of an eternal verity in her mind. It was supplemental to what the old scientist in the museum had said. It explained his remark, amplified it.

Art was life crystallized.

But life was not mere religion in the usual acceptance of the word. There was one other great, preponderant thing.

Life also was love—love in all its manifestations. No, life was love only, love merely; and religion was but a realm of love. The glances of the men in the street, her devotion to Joy, that which had brought Joy into being, and the porcelains, fabrics, paintings, sculptures in the museum, the noblest church on the avenue, the faintest bleat of the poorest sinner—all these were of that life which was religion, which was love.

"I was born at Bayou Pochette," Elizabeth whispered to herself.

She meant that only at Bayou Pochette had life for her really begun. There she had awakened—like Eve in Eden—created, prepared.

And for her Bayou Pochette increasingly became a shrine.

She scarcely wondered why, the knowledge was so instinctive; but the voice that told her that Bayou Pochette was not only a shrine but the one shrine in the world where she would find salvation she recognized as the voice of her soul.

She was like any one with a secret grief—a vital secret of any kind. To get away from the scrutinies and brilliancies of Fifth Avenue for a while into the shades of a temple, that was what she needed.

Her soul was right.

"Whatever ails you, Bess?" Joy demanded, kissing her.

But before Elizabeth, slow-spoken, could formulate an answer, Joy was off into a rapturous, humorous, and, at the same time, vaguely serious account of how a certain young aristocrat named Quincy was showing himself to be the silliest "man" in the world.

On Elizabeth's far horizon, which was the heliotrope color of Bayou Pochette on a stormy day, there came a play of lightning.

"We're going South," said Elizabeth, "to visit Uncle Floyd."

On a little island of more or less solid earth, back in the cypress brake bordering Bayou Pochette, there was a clearing. This had originally been made by the fall of a huge cypress-tree, the white bole of which still lay there unrotted, forming a bridge across one of the uncharted streams with which the whole region abounded. The head of the tree, however, had been chopped and burned away, thus disencumbering enough of the lush earth of the original clearing for a small garden.

In this garden were beans and okra, turnips and lettuce, all in splendid condition, unhampered by grass or weeds, showing that they received a meticulous care.

The place, moreover, had an esthetic value not usually discoverable about the gardens of a mere "swamp nigger" or "poor white." At one place, on the edge of it, there was a carefully tended bush of the cape jasmine, with its shining dark leaves and waxen, heavily fragrant blossoms. Over one of the stark branches of the fallen cypress there trailed the scarlet army of a Cherokee rose.

The first few yellow spears of sunlight to penetrate the blue shadows of the swamp had just fallen on this scarlet mass, when the proprietor of the domain himself appeared. He came as silently as a swimming alligator might have come. And, also, he came by water—in that queerly-hooded, Chinese-built old boat of his.

It was Fang Shu.

His years were manifest in the leisureliness of his movements, yet even these movements differed not so greatly from what the movements of any old swamp-dweller would have been. He attached his

boat to the cypress trunk. He put his foot on a branch that made a convenient step, lifted himself up to the natural bridge and padded forward softly to the deeply-worn head of a path in the earth.

Here Fang Shu paused and looked about him, but he did this rather with the expression of a man who looks at things invisible to the eyes of the flesh. He was old. If there was a god of this garden-patch he probably knew it, if any one did. He delivered himself of a slight but solemn gesture of salute.

After that his movements were more materialistic.

From one of his pockets he brought a dry bladder, such as some folks use as a tobacco-pouch. From another he brought out a turkey-feather. He considered these meditatively, and evidently reaffirmed some previous judgment that they were good for his purpose.

The sunlight was growing stronger. Through the columned vistas of the cypress brake the yellow shafts were more and more numerous. There was a drift of blue and gray tatters of mist—as if the departing night were a woman with a trailing robe. Fang Shu had a glance for all this also. The hour was favorable to his purpose.

He went straight to his lettuce bed; and there, stooping low, with his open pouch in his left hand, passed from plant to plant, lifting up the lower leaves gently with the tip of his plume. He hadn't examined in this way the ground under more than a dozen lettuce-heads before he discovered the thing he sought.

It lay there in a tiny nest of warm earth protected from the dew, a knot of shiny red and black not much larger than a baby's fist, yet full-grown and deadly, a coral snake.

The snake made no effort to escape. It was not that kind. It possessed neither speed nor protective coloring. In fact, its coloring was a standing advertisement to larger creatures to hold aloof. Down through the ages its tribe had come, preferring a diet of beetles, young lizards, and similar game, but always with the power to exterminate such larger creatures as foolishly ignored the red-and-black danger-sign.

Fang Shu remarked the tranquil insolence of the tiny black eyes. He hesitated but a second. With the stiff brush of his turkey-plume he hoisted the snake into his skin-bag with a movement so deft and swift that the serpent was a prisoner before it could either strike or uncoil.

Fang Shu drew the string of the bladder-purse and dropped it to the ground. Squatting there on his heels he watched the bladder jerk and writhe with the movements of the captive. The old Chinaman showed no special pleasure. Solemnity was still the note about him. Even while he watched that uncanny thing on the ground in front of him one could have told that his thoughts were remote.

Finally, when the contortions of the pouch had subsided, he picked it up by the string and started off with it. At the edge of his garden he paused by the jasmine bush and plucked a few blossoms, being careful not to touch the petals, which would have spoiled the whiteness of them. With flowers and snake he returned the way he had come to his tethered boat. Here he placed his fresh blossoms in the mustard bottles at the side of his joss, while the now slowly heaving pouch lay immediately in front of the image.

Fang Shu may or may not have performed some special rite proper to the occasion. It is never profitable to inquire too closely into the personal variations of any man's religion.

That afternoon found Fang Shu in the streets of the particular Chinatown that saw him oftenest. It was the favorite place of rendezvous for all the Chinamen along this part of the coast—and for others, new arrivals in the country, arrivals who had come in mysteriously and as mysteriously might go.

It was Sunday.

Some of those Chinamen whom Fang Shu saw quietly chaffed the old man on a return of youth. Why should he have come back to the settlement on Sunday when he had been there the day before?

"Yours are all five!" one grinned, holding up his hand with fingers open, meaning, of course, the five master vices.

But there was no real curiosity as to

Fang Shu's presence. Curiosity is impolite, also unwholesome—as the sages pointed out centuries ago and as human events ever since have never ceased to demonstrate. Neither did Fang Shu show any curiosity as to where he might find a certain visitor to the town. There was no hurry.

He wandered in and out of the dingy, clamorous, highly-scented restaurants and shops. His quest ended about sundown in Tom Duck's smoke-room. There were three or four customers already in the place more or less coiled up on their sleeping-pads, and one of these was the man Fang Shu sought.

"Accept my best congratulations," said Tom Duck as he slipped away after having served his friend.

"May this add to your store of virtuous acts," Fang Shu recited the ancient jest.

The light flickered in the haze of opium-smoke.

There was a drone of Chinese song, a babble of crazy, drifting Chinese incoherence. Away off somewhere sounded the tinkle of a queer-stringed instrument, the throb of a drum, the trill of a fife, the chattering interlude of a laughing girl—but all very faint, as faint as an audible dream.

Then a shriek!

A broken, jabbering sort of a shriek, that scattered quite even the heavy dreams of Tom Duck's emporium, and Tom Duck came slipping into his smoke-room to see what had happened.

One of his customers—a new customer for whom he did not care greatly, anyway—was sitting up on his sleeping-pad, trying to drag something from his right hand. The something was a pouch like a bladder tobacco-pouch, and the mouth of this had been slipped over two of the smoker's fingers and knotted so cunningly that now he couldn't get his fingers free.

It was an odd, bad thing to look at and listen to—for a vendor of dreams—and Tom Duck hoped that it wouldn't last long.

It didn't.

Fang Shu, roused only a little, mumbled the well-known lamentation:

"By Heaven's supreme command he flies
Through the blue expanse of sky and air."

Later, and on until the end of his days,

this was the "No. 2 Killing" of Fang Shu's private chronicles. The No. 1 of the series was an event which occurred in China years ago. And that also had been because of a girl.

Then, moreover, as now, his conscience was clear, his soul uplifted.

CHAPTER XV.

OUT OF THE SHADOWS.

THE announcement leaped from the newspaper Elizabeth had been reading and swung there before her gaze.

The victim was later identified as a Charley Yen, otherwise Yet Ghee, but recently arrived in this country from Peking, where he was attached to one of the American missions.

What did it signify?

There was a column almost devoted to the incident of Charley Yen's demise; not that either he or his death was of any great importance, even if the circumstances did hint at one of those baffling, unprovable Chinese murders. Charley had been found in a muddy lane, and in one of his hands he still grasped the snake that had bitten him. The snake was still biting him, for that matter. At any rate, it still had its fangs buried in one of his fingers.

The point was not that this half-breed Chinaman, drunk, might have picked up the serpent as a bit of gaudy jewelry some one had lost. The point was that for the first time, so far as any one knew, it was clearly shown that a coral snake could kill a man quite as effectively as a moccasin or a rattlesnake could do it.

So much for the newspaper's interest in the event.

Not so Elizabeth's.

She remembered Charley Yen—one Charley Yen. Could there have been two of them? Hardly, with that same Chinese name, Yet Ghee.

No!

She had seen him, and he had seen her, as she and Joy were passing through New Orleans on their way to Bayou Pochette. It was one of those glimpsing, minor incidents scarcely noticed at the time, but

which spectrally return and loom afterward. As this incident did now, as she sat there on the porch of the old white house on the lagoon—by herself—except for the shades.

From the open windows back of her came the tinpanny strump and tinkle of the same old piano she herself had played eighteen years ago. Joy laughed. Joy loved the piano because of its Chinese noises. To the accompaniment of it Joy sang a Chinese song.

Charley Yen was in that little procession that carried Elizabeth from the mission to Mrs. Wu's retreat up the red hill. Charley Yen had shocked the proprieties of the place all askew by his carryings on with a certain kitchen wench. Charley Yen must have been the only one who ever afterward escaped from Mrs. Wu's command as a possible tale-bearer. The kitchen girl could have told Charley why the white girl had been brought up to this place from the mission. It was the sort of story that would have remained in Charley's brain.

"I'm morbid," said Elizabeth.

But her train of thought would not leave her.

Morbid she had been—secretly so—ever since her arrival at the old place. Ready to confront and lay the old ghosts she had been. That had been her purpose in coming here—her main purpose—to get rid of the haunt in her life.

But she had not counted on the overwhelming strength of the old associations. The live oak, the smell of orange and jasmine, the spell of the lagoon—fight these things as she would, they possessed an occult power to frighten her soul. But she wouldn't flee. She—would—not—flee! She would remain here until the fear was dominated, until she could go away and call her life her own and offer it—or what was left of it—to Guy La Salle, should that still be his and her desire.

Did this thing that she had just read in the newspaper mean that a ghost—one of the many—was laid? Or did it mean that but one more ghost had been thrust upon her attention?

She didn't know.

"Good morning, Miss Valladon!"

Elizabeth started, turned with a ready smile. She saw a polished youth in riding-clothes. It was to herself that he had spoken, but she could see that his interest was questing elsewhere.

"Good morning, Mr. Quincy! How did you manage to discover us so soon? We heard that you had arrived only last night."

There was a friendly gibe in the remark which Quincy acknowledged by a grin and a flush. He was at that age—twenty-three or so.

"I—er—thought that perhaps—you and your sister would like to take a canter—"

He went on with his amiable speech as, in response to Elizabeth's invitation, he stepped up onto the porch and sat down in a chair at her side. She smiled at him. Her lips, without faltering, formed and let fall all the words that were necessary. There had come a sudden halt to the Chinese music in the drawing-room. Instinct told her that Joy was at this moment up-stairs frantically fluffing her hair, otherwise enhancing her native charms; and instinct bade Elizabeth to cover the delay. But it was only instinctively that she obeyed.

Down in the depths of her the problem was suddenly surging.

What if Robert Quincy should ever suspect the truth of Joy's birth—of the adventure in her own life, of which Joy was the ever-present reminder? Would Quincy be there now so complacently chatting of rides and picnics and having them over to meet his family? The boy was in love with Joy, and Joy was moderately in love with him. Could she let them go blindly on to the possible marriage? What if she did—and then, what if the truth came out?

All this shows how the ghosts were about.

The sunshine flooded the lagoon and the near prospect of trees and garden. But all this was haunted for Elizabeth. It was veiled with the haze of eighteen years like a landscape dimly seen; and through this landscape a spectral semblance of herself fled wraithlike with the shade of Jerry Colton in joyous pursuit.

Around from the other side of the house, markedly feeble but only slightly bent, still the fine figure of a Southern gentleman grown very old, came Major Valladon.

"I'm always glad, sir," he said, "to meet a Quincy. I knew your grandfather."

"Fate," smiled the boy, "seems to have brought the Quincys and the Valladons together again."

But his interest had leaped to the door of the old mansion, where it had been hovering more or less ever since Quincy's arrival. At the door had appeared that younger of the Valladon "sisters."

"There is Joy," he said.

She paused there radiant. She was dressed in white. Her exotic blue eyes were full of mischief and secrecy and knowledge of the world, which only she possessed. To Elizabeth Valladon, standing there, looking over at this child who was flesh of her own flesh and bone of her bone, it seemed almost as if she were looking at a ghost of herself, a ghost of what she herself had been these many years ago.

"God spare her the tragedy!" whispered Elizabeth in her maternal heart.

"Too late! Too late!" came the ghostly echo.

"Mercy," Elizabeth appealed, "on her account!"

If the Quincys had now resumed an interest in this long forgotten part of the country, as Major Valladon had intimated, and as they most undoubtedly had—owing to the somewhat disguised but perfectly obvious machinations of the Quincy heir—they were not alone in this respect. The region had become, to some extent, a center of interest to the country at large.

An eloquent Congressman, himself a son of the old South, had bestirred himself in Washington.

"This, sir, was the legendary land of milk and honey. No more favored spot can be found within the limits of these United States. A glance at the map will show you—this peninsula—almost surrounded by tidal water—high and sandy—a mild and salubrious climate. Not only that, but consider the surrounding population. Patriots of the oldest and purest stock in America, sir!"

The Congressman won, and Camp Gerard—there had been a famous general of that name in the Colton family—was staked out on the Gulf shore, not far from the Valladon

home, as distance is reckoned by horse or motor, for the training of officers in the new National Army.

"I'm for the war, and I'm going to get into this thing," young Quincy announced.

He had ridden over to the camp-site with Elizabeth and Joy. All that Quincy waited for was the result of his application. He was in a fever of enthusiasm. Already he had become acquainted with one of the young civilian surveyors of the camp, who himself was an applicant for admission.

"There he is now," quoth Quincy. "I told him that I'd be over to-day with a couple of ladies. He said that he would arrange things so he could show us around."

And Quincy, excusing himself, was off at a gallop in pursuit of his man who, also mounted, was cantering along a quarter of a mile away. The two of them returned together, but not immediately. It was the stranger who took his time about coming. There for a minute or two he appeared to be more interested in a group of negro ax-men than in the announcement Quincy brought him.* But, after that, they were coming up at a gallop.

The Misses Valladon saw a serious youth of about Robert Quincy's age. He was rather roughly dressed. It was difficult to judge of his height because of the rangy big horse he rode, but he looked short. He was of the build known as "chunky." And his face was a fighting face—broad, steady-eyed, nose small but aquiline.

"I don't like him," was the secret comment of the younger Miss Valladon.

She instantly knew that the assertion was due to that slight delay of his in hastening off to make her acquaintance. But she wouldn't admit this to herself. Nor could she deny this slight additional sting to her pride: This youth had been apprized that callers were coming, and like this he had dressed to receive them—an old hat, a gray flannel shirt open at the throat, and other things in keeping.

But to the elder Miss Valladon there came an entirely different sort of thought. It was a thought of Gerard Colton.

"Miss Valladon—Miss Joy Valladon," panted Quincy, reining in his mount, "Mr.—Lieutenant—"

"Not yet," grinned the other, pulling off his hat.

"Mr. William Yates," Quincy completed.

Yates had taken off his right glove, but he was at a slight loss as to what next to do. Elizabeth was the nearer to him. She made a slight movement to offer her hand. Yates was at her side in a moment. He managed that rangy horse of his like an Arab. Their fingers clasped. That fighting face of his broke into a smile that was like visible music.

Joy ignored him as from a distance. She did this gaily. Not possibly, nor for a mint of money, could she have been sullen, even in make-believe. She watched her chance and fell in behind as the others started across the field.

After that Quincy was at her side. She was as pleasant to Quincy as she had ever been, which was exceedingly so, according to that youth's own judgment. But even Quincy may have perceived that Joy's attention was wandering in the blithesome tangle of their conversation.

It was true.

As a matter of fact, Yates was of a type that Joy had never met before. With the Quincys of this world she was familiar. Poor though she and Elizabeth had been, the young men they had met had always been mostly of the Quincy type—the tea-drinkers of the embassies, the brothers and cousins of the schoolgirls she had known in London and New York. To her immature judgment all these had been "men," after a fashion. Now Joy was admitting somewhat reluctantly to herself that this former judgment of hers may have been immature.

In brief, as she looked at the flat back and square shoulders of the youth on the horse ahead of her, she found herself revising this old judgment and saying:

"*This is a man!*"

The moon that came lingeringly up over Bayou Pochette that night came to a place where it could look straight into the window of Joy's bedroom and remain there for the calm scrutiny of infinite age.

Joy stirred in her bed. Her eyes opened.

The white curtains were performing a lazy dance to the slow tempo of the breeze.

There was no darkness anywhere, just a subdued blue radiance, which was one with the tepid perfume of the air and the muted strings of the nocturnal orchestra. She lay there basking in dreamy consciousness of this, and a mingled, complex, slightly disquieting memory of the day and the two boys who, for her, were the principal actors in it. Then she sat up the better to listen.

She had heard it before. She had been hearing it all along and had scarcely noticed. But now she heard it distinctly.

Was that a bird or some one playing a flute? A flute was what it sounded like—such flute-notes as she had heard in China: the three tremulous, shifting quavers of a bamboo flute. She listened with delight. She listened with a sort of mysticism, as if those notes were of a nature to merge her into the softly radiant, softly perfumed, softly vocal stuff of the night.

"I'm in love," said Joy to herself. "Wouldn't it be just simply wonderful if I were in love!"

There was a creaking signal of movement from the adjoining room. Elizabeth also was astir. The door between the two rooms was ajar, but now the door was pushed open and Elizabeth herself stood there looking across at the girl who sat there in the moonlight.

"Bess," whispered Joy, "come here!"

Elizabeth came over and sat down on the edge of her daughter's bed. Elizabeth coiled one of her soft hands around the girl's head, drew her close, kissed her.

Never since the beginning of the world, would any one have sworn, had there been two sisters who loved each other more greatly than did these. They had never quarreled. They had never known the slightest hint of such jealousy as may sometimes come between sisters, however devoted to each other they may be.

"Dear old Bess!" whispered Joy.

"Why aren't you asleep?" queried Elizabeth gently.

"I was just about asleep," said Joy; "but—the queerest thing—I must have been dreaming—but it seemed to me that I heard some one playing a bamboo flute. Did you hear it?"

"Yes."

Elizabeth was deep in the past. She couldn't help it on a night like this. The past was what prevented her from sleeping. She could dream enough awake! As one who spoke in a dream she now continued:

"I used to hear that same thing—years ago—when I was here before."

"Was that," Joy asked in the little-girl voice of her most intimate moods—"was that when mama was still alive?"

"Yes."

"You've never told me about her."

"She was so good!"

"Do I look like her?"

"Very."

"Was she here with you?"

"Yes."

Elizabeth, with a straining heart, scarcely could have told whether it was of herself she spoke, or of her own mother—she who had died in the Chinese mission.

"Bess," said Joy, after an interval of silence, "I want to ask you something, and I want you to tell me the truth."

"What?"

Elizabeth was holding her breath.

"You won't laugh at me?"

"Of course not."

"It's this," whispered Joy. "Were you ever in love?"

CHAPTER XVI.

DIANA OF THE GHOSTS.

"I'VE known what love is," Elizabeth answered, with her face turned to the window through which she could see the moonlit lagoon. The spell of the past was strong upon her. Here in this very room her soul was born, so to speak. It was born to an annunciation like this present hour, with the breath and the voice and the light all the same. At that window she had knelt and dreamed those dreams such as she had never known before; been granted such visions as no woman is ever granted more than once in her life. She could guess the miracle that was evolving now in the heart of this child of hers. "I've known what love is," she confessed softly.

But the inflection of her voice, and the tremor of her hand on Joy's shoulder, and the night itself, took up her words and developed them, her words being merely the theme of an improvisation.

"Who was it?" asked Joy, after a sympathetic delay. "Was it Mr. La Salle?"

"No, dear."

"Did I ever see him?"

"No."

It occurred only then to Elizabeth that this was Joy's own father concerning whom Joy asked, to whom she herself had indirectly referred. A little wave of remorse beat the shore of her conscience. Vaguely, she felt that she had cheated Joy out of some rightful heritage, and that that was the measure of her sin. Was the world right, after all, in the conventions it had established? The world was old. The world had experienced all things. The world was what geologists call a conglomerate—of facts, knowledge, wisdom.

"Why haven't you ever married?" Joy asked.

"I've been happier—just with you."

"Yet marriage must be so wonderful!"

"You're too young to think of it."

"Didn't you think of it at my age?"

"Perhaps."

"Answer me," Joy commanded, embracing Elizabeth enthusiastically. She looked into Elizabeth's face with an elfin smile. "Listen! I was going to keep it to myself, but I just simply can't."

"Go ahead; I'm listening."

"After all," Joy passed sober judgment, "it's nothing to be ashamed of. No girl—unless she's a freak—escapes."

"What in the world are you driving at?"

"I was out walking in the woods to-day with Billy and Bob—"

"Mr. Yates and Mr. Quincy! Yes?"

"Oh, Bess, you're so old-fashioned! You can't call those boys 'Mr.' Well, anyway, we came across an old colored woman who was out there in the woods digging roots. She said that she sold them to a patent-medicine house. And we were looking at her while she talked to us and went right on with her digging."

Elizabeth was listening, but her thoughts were elsewhere.

"But the old woman got out the root she had been grubbing for and turned around and looked at me. And what do you suppose she did? It was positively thrilling."

"What did the old woman do?" Elizabeth inquired mildly, as she continued to play with one of Joy's curls.

"She dropped her trowel. She threw up her hands. She said: 'Lord-a-mussy, chile!' or something like that. She said: 'I 'clar' to goodness, I took you fer a ghos'!'"

Elizabeth's playful hand stopped in its movement.

"What did she mean?"

"That's what we asked her," Joy continued. "She said: 'You ain't Miss Valladolid, is you?' And when I said that I was, she almost had another fit. She said: 'Lord, chile, you ain't changed none in the last twenty years.' Wasn't it delicious? The dear old soul! She must have thought that I was you."

"What else did she say?" Elizabeth demanded softly, mentally holding her breath. She knew Joy's method of relating stories. She could bring her accounts of even the most meager incidents to some sort of a climax.

Joy laughed softly, snuggled closer in Elizabeth's embrace.

"The old woman said," Joy concluded delightedly, "that she used to see a young lady who was my living image walking through these woods with a young white gentleman, and that they sho' did love each other. Ah, Bess, sweetheart! There, I wouldn't have told you if I'd thought you were going to cry. Kiss me, Bess! Dear little Bessie! There! There! I understand!"

Elizabeth was becoming more and more like a chaser of spirits, a huntress of specters, a Diana of the Ghosts, as nights succeeded nights, and days followed days, in the gradual development of her private drama.

In the old days—long, long ago—there had been a famous pack of hounds connected with the Valladolid estate. The place had never been, of course, quite denuded of dogs since; but animals of small value, for

the most part—heavy sleepers, wood-runners, hound-degenerates who lacked the moral upkeep and inspiration of human companionship.

There was one old fellow, however, who had come deeply under Elizabeth's sway, and whose friendship she cherished. He was of no earthly use to any one, as everybody about the place was ready to testify. But he may have been of some unearthly use. It may have been this quality that made him valuable to Elizabeth. His name was Bolivar, but his only claim to celebrity was that he was regarded as a canine lunatic. Perfectly harmless, the gentlest of creatures, but given—if the negroes were to be believed—to whining at things invisible, to baying trails that gave no trace of footprints in the most telltale sand.

Bolivar, who disdained the society of others, always accompanied Elizabeth in her wanderings about Bayou Pochette. He was the right sort of companion for a Diana of the Ghosts.

And that was what she was.

She visited all the old scenes. She sat with a tremulous heart in the summer-house in the depths of the overgrown garden where the tea-bushes were—there where she and Colton had met until she saw the snake. She sought and discovered that palmetto which stood in the glade among the hardwood trees—there where he had lain on the Bermuda grass and toyed with her finger until that time the scorpions drove them away. But most of all, she visited the ancient live oak with the cross on its side. The cross was still there. In no way which she could see had the tree or the place it stood in changed at all.

Here, after a fashion, she sought to pray. But the prayer was formless, inarticulate as to words. It was a mere yearning, a mere struggling surge toward enlightenment, a silent *De Profundis*—silent, but with as much breath and effort back of it as would have gone into a special service at Notre Dame, and also as pealing to the soul of her, with bells, and organ, and choir.

She did this while Bolivar served as congregation. For Bolivar understood. The old hound was silent and reverent, just like

a congregation, and stimulative of her own communication with the physically non-existent.

She did more than this.

She recognized the emotional danger—the emotional folly—of her action; but she reconstituted the place into the chapel which it had been those years ago when the world was young. She collected the soft Spanish moss of the branches and heaped it onto that natural bench there at the foot of the cross among the live-oak roots. She brought some flowers there, as she had formerly done.

She called him by name:

“Gerard!”

But the responding silence smote her more heavily than a voice would have done. She was invaded by a thrill of ghostly fear.

Why had she done this thing?

Was it that she was on the trail of something—on the trail of that truth which was to set her free? Or had she merely stumbled upon some incantation which would perpetuate the ghost that had been haunting her so long and which threatened now to haunt that daughter of hers?

Bolivar growled—he who ordinarily never growled.

“What is it, Bolivar?”

But Bolivar was looking off into the shadows—ears cocked, his front feet uneasy, as hounds do who scent trouble.

Elizabeth cast a conscience-stricken glance at that chapel of hers. What if she should be surprised here by some one? How could she ever explain the presence of the flowers—or her own presence here—or the mood that she was in?

She felt like running away. She did take a step or two toward flight. Then she stopped. And she was quaking. She had heard some one walking—walking stealthily—in the neighboring woods—some one who came nearer.

Bolivar gave a short, yelping bark, as both he and Elizabeth saw a man emerge through the screening branches.

And there came to Elizabeth a sort of gasping, momentary realization that she had summoned a ghost, after all, and that here was the ghost in front of her now: incarnate: a man.

She had recognized him: Noah Kregg.

"How do you do?" said Noah, smiling but startled, with a quick look about him.

"How do you do?" Elizabeth responded, on her guard.

They eyed each other. She remembered perfectly the first time that Noah had looked at her, and also what she then felt. It seemed to her as if their whole acquaintance, such as it was, had been encompassed in that look, right on up to the time that they had stood together in the Valladon parlor where Gerard Colton lay dead.

In this first, fleeting, crowded and disordered scrutiny now, there was time for her to wonder—a bit wildly, perhaps—how she came to recollect all this so swiftly; for that matter, how she had come to recognize so readily this man who stood in front of her.

Eighteen years had passed since they had last seen each other. They had been eighteen years clearly unfavorable to Kregg. He was shabbily dressed. His bony face had taken on a wolfish look—the look of a wolf that has been both hungry and hunted. Even now his look was changing from that hint of alarm to a hint of wolfish anticipation—furtive, slaving, cruel. But no, he hadn't so greatly changed.

"I was just walking back through the woods to look up some strayed hogs," Noah informed her amiably.

"I hope that you find them," said Elizabeth, and she turned.

"It's funny," Noah persisted, "our meeting right here."

His eyes, and some lurking inwardness of his attitude, had her in a sort of panic by this time; a panic which she tried not to admit; something compounded of both fear and disgust. But she would not permit herself to run away. Again she faced him.

"How do you mean—'funny'?"

Noah took two or three long strides toward her and again she felt, more strongly than ever, the impulse to flee. She had hunted a bird of paradise. She had come upon a tiger.

"I suppose you've forgot all about that accident that happened here!"

"What accident?"

He grinned, incredulously, but consented to explain.

"Why, right here's where some one cut down on Jerry Colton." There was a shuddering pause. "And it served him right, by God!"

"How—how dare you—say such an evil thing?" Elizabeth found breath to demand.

She was suffering from a double shock. Shock enough it had been, the revelation that here it was—in this sylvan temple—that Colton, flushed from her arms, had fallen; yet Kregg had given her a shock more terrific by his comment.

"I mean this," he said, with stealthy emphasis: "Whoever done it done right."

"What?"

Elizabeth's horror amounted to fascination—something that hypnotized her, all but paralyzed her.

"Sure!" said Noah. He cast a hasty glance over his shoulder, fixed her with his stripping and violating stare. "Sure! Since it was to save your reputation!"

"You lie!"

Elizabeth shrank. She shuddered. Her last two words may not have been audible at all, that frozen and breathless she was. But she would not flee. Not even had she been able to do so would she have fled now. This was the thing she had been looking for. Here was the ghost she had sought. Unwittingly, perhaps; but she had sought it.

"You've heard what your own uncle said—ain't yuh? Us men down here don't allow no one to take liberties with the honor of our womenfolk."

CHAPTER XVII.

BATTLE-GROUND.

ELIZABETH scarcely heard him. She was listening to the voice of her intuition, and her intuition was clamoring at her:

"This is the creature who killed that boy you loved!"

Small wonder that she could hear but little else just then; that she stood there dazed, shaken, yet fanning some inward altar-flame.

Noah was undergoing some further evolution—as if, at first, he had been afraid of some ghost of his own, then somewhat afraid of her, and now feared nothing in view of Elizabeth's fear.

"Why," he said, with righteous indignation, "he oughta been shot, 'n' sooner 'n he was, runnin' round after you like that, 'n' you nothin' but a girl that didn't know no better."

His righteous indignation yielded to a sneer, the sneer to gloating.

"Bolivar," Elizabeth called softly. "Come on, boy!"

She intended to get away. She had decided that Kregg in some way would have to be killed, would have to be punished terribly. But she couldn't do this with her own hands. She saw no means at present. She would have to reflect. Above all, she would have to keep her own person intact and away from Kregg as she would have had to avoid contact with any unclean and ferocious brute.

"Ain't mad, are yuh?" Kregg demanded.

No answer.

"Don't think I don't know what I'm talkin' about, do yuh?"

Still no answer.

There was a throaty whimper from Bolivar, as the old hound put up his head at her side and took contact with her fingertips. Elizabeth had turned once again toward home, every cell of her body aquiver with pain and watchfulness, each cell a tiny, cornered creature confronted by death and ready to die fighting.

The whole episode had thus far developed with—or as if by—explosive flashes. There came another—from Bolivar, this time: a sharp yelp of pain.

She whirled.

Bolivar looked up at her apologetically. Kregg laughed.

Elizabeth, from the swirling flock of sensations, panics, prayers, and schemes of retribution which beat about her head like frightened birds, brought down the bird of a recollection.

On just such a day as this, with just such an atmosphere, late in the afternoon, with the mocking-birds already beginning their vespers, had the initial tragedy be-

fallen. And in this place! Was this the rounding of the cycle she had dimly foreseen? Was this to be the time and place of her own death?

But the bare sight of Noah Kregg now was sufficient to drive out of her any such mystic musings. She herself, after a fashion, became as fiercely animal as he was.

It was instinctive with her to try to frighten him.

"You'll die for this!"

"What for?"

"You won't escape."

"My My!" mocked Noah. "Who are you countin' on callin' in to do the job?"

The question was an indirect reference to the age and failing strength of Major Valladon. Like certain among those of the lowly born, Noah Kregg could never quite forgive a man like the major his superior birth and manners. Elizabeth caught the allusion. It made her wince. It fanned that inner fire of hers to a stronger flame.

"You're the murderer of Gerard Colton," she whispered.

And the moment that she herself heard the declaration she knew it to be true—so nearly divine are some of the attributes of the human voice, even though that voice be one's own. The conviction that came with her unexpected accusation was strengthened, moreover, by the tiny spasm of apprehension that flickered there for a moment or two in Kregg's leering mask.

He again flicked a stealthy, swift look of caution about him. When his eyes were on hers again, he had recovered himself.

"Suppose I did," he whined softly.

Elizabeth could see as never before how dangerous he was, how perilous was her own situation. Kregg had tightened up his muscles to the suggestion of a crouch. She was unarmed. Her strength would have been no more availing against his than a rabbit's strength would have availed against a rattlesnake's. She was far from the house. To call out could scarcely aid her, even had she been able to call out.

Unarmed, yet not entirely so. Her eyes were blue. Through them there looked something that made Kregg hesitate as any brute might have hesitated in the presence of that somewhat more than human fire.

They stood there face to face, death in the air, the silent woods about them. Silent and watchful were the woods, like an audience absorbed in a familiar but never-tiresome play. Then there came a gradual, fateful, drama-breaking interruption.

Out of the underbrush fringing the desecrated temple not more than a dozen yards away appeared an old man with a bundle of palmetto stalks under his arm.

Unmindful, he approached them, passed them without a look and only a murmured word.

Him also Elizabeth recognized—also a figure out of the past. It was the old Chinaman she had succored and who had given her the jade amulet.

Fang Shu!

He passed and did not turn. He padded away in silence and was finally out of sight. But Elizabeth knew that she was safe.

Safe for the present moment, at any rate, as both her logic and her intuition told her; as safe as if that old Chinaman going by had been a policeman or an angel. There was now a witness to this meeting of hers with Gregg. Should any physical evil befall her now, not the ends of the earth would be remote enough to give Gregg shelter, as Gregg himself must know and indicated that he did know. But she did not, could not, see the subtler and greater danger that enveloped her.

Reaction from the encounter, so brief and violent, had left them both breathing deeply as from an actual physical conflict.

"If you ever speak to me again—" Elizabeth began.

But Noah interrupted her.

"You've got no call to talk—callin' an innocent man names!" He flung the taunt at her with jeering laughter: "How about that kid of yours? She's your little sister, is she?"

"Yes!"

"Har! Then, what 're yuh changing color fer?"

The battle was unequal. It was unequal before. Then it had been the physical element that counted. Now that the physical element was less to be reckoned with, Noah was none the less brutally dominant. Eliza-

beth willed herself to run away. She took a few futile steps even when she knew that they were futile. Into the shrinking tissue of her hidden self Noah had thrown a harpoon, and the harpoon had a string to it.

"I know yuh, and I know all about yuh," she heard him gibe as she started falteringly off in the direction that Fang Shu had taken. "Went out to China, and had your baby there! Thought yuh could get away with it! Thought yuh could come back here 'n' swell around!"

The world was lurching away from under Elizabeth's feet. She was so obsessed with her own wild thoughts that it was several seconds before she was aware that Noah had followed her, that he was at her side.

"Wait a minute," he urged.

"Don't touch me! Don't speak to me!" she said in tones so calm that Noah was momentarily taken aback.

But it was only for a moment. He recovered himself. He changed his tone with the swift slyness of any primitive creature in possession of its natural prey. And any woman was Noah's natural prey—when circumstances were right, when her weakness stood revealed.

"Listen!" he urged. "You'd better listen. Why, I don't want to do nothin' to hurt the reputation of that little girl of yours."

Elizabeth was listening as if her whole body had become an ear, but she continued on her way, not very fast, and walking steadily enough, perhaps, but feeling as if she staggered.

"All right," Noah sighed. "Mebbe you think I don't know how you went up to that Chink woman's house on the hill, 'n' how yuh pulled your bluff when you came back to the place where they were takin' the names of the white folks, 'n' passed the baby off as your sister. Why, y' ought to be ashamed of yourself—'n' her, too!—pretendin' to be fitten to marry herself off to young Mr. Quincy! Why, if she was a man, we'd give her a dose of tar and feathers, 'n' I'm goin' to tell her so, too, as I'm tellin' you!"

Elizabeth's mental staggering became bodily. She paused. She put out her hand against a tree, and leaned against it.

"I've got a proposition to make," Noah whispered thickly.

She, Elizabeth Valladon, was listening to this; was forced to listen to it. Why? Because, years ago, she had found the world beautiful, and a certain youth beautiful, and because they had rediscovered the Garden of Eden together.

She heard the old refrain, the old words:

The voice that breathed o'er Eden
That earliest wedding day;
The primal marriage blessing—
It hath not passed away.

In her psychic nostrils there was a faint fragrance of orange-blossoms. The eyes of her soul saw the cross and the tree, herself and Colton in the midst of the green shadows. All this was like a backward glance at the Blessed Isles by one who is damned.

"It's this, or that," Noah was saying. "I'm as good-hearted as any man. Why, I don't want to see the little girl come to no harm, no more than you do. I feel fatherly for her, you bein' her mother, and us knowin' each other so long. 'N' I deserve some credit. Everybody says that. Look at the way I've brung myself up. I'm merely sort of askin' fer my rights, seein' that I'm ready to protect your reputation 'n' not let nobody know that Joy's a—"

"I'll kill you if you say that word," Elizabeth exclaimed through set teeth.

"Oh, no, you won't," Noah grinned. He became crudely confidential. "You ain't kept this secret all these years without settin' some store by it. You love your little girl, don't yuh? You ain't goin' to balk 'n' spoil her life, are yuh? It ain't as if I was the first!"

In sheer madness of desperation, Elizabeth struck at him. Her convulsive fingers against the tree had broken off a dead twig, and with this she struck at his face again and again. She used the twig as a stiletto. It broke off at the very first blow, but she did not notice this. She noticed nothing. She hardly knew what had transpired until she found herself running, running.

Then she turned again, expecting to find that ghost incarnate at her heels, and ready to fight him to the death.

But her startled eyes saw nothing for a second or two except reeling trees and a sky gone black. Then, through this nightmare, she had a confused perception of her tormentor striking and kicking at the old ghost-hunting hound named Bolivar.

Again she ran.

She came at last into the back of the ancient gardens and dragged herself to the summer-house. Here she seated herself—to catch her breath, to get a fresh hold on life; but a prey to such torture, physical and mental, as few but women may ever know.

She looked about her. The summer-house was a construction of cedar poles. They were clean and white and faintly fragrant. Through the opening that served as doorway lay the unreckoned opulence of flower and leaf vibrant and responsive to the sun. Birds sang. Butterflies were lazily adrift. The sky had gone softly but brilliantly blue again.

What was the meaning of all this beauty? Was it but a mockery—doubly hideous because of its beauty—of some hidden curse of which men and women were the victims?

Or had nothing changed—or was nothing wrong—but herself? Was it right and foreordained that she should give herself to that monster of the woods back there to requite her former error? And was all this horror but the creation of her revolt—her revolt against something that she could not or would not understand? And if she did fling herself into the jaws of Moloch, would this be accepted as a sufficient sacrifice for the sparing of her daughter?

It was a Moloch who ruled the world! Wasn't it?

All these questions filled Elizabeth with a mortal sickness.

It wasn't against Noah Gregg that the waves of Elizabeth's emotion so wildly beat.

It was against the Moloch who was this man's god.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.



That Sharp Yankee

by
Raymond S. Spears

LARRY POLRAY'S shanty-boat was tied in an eddy where a northwest wind sweeping diagonally up the Ohio River above Cairo could not hit it. The wind was raw and cold, so that when Polray went out to look at his bow lines, he shivered from head to foot.

"It's an awful day to be out!" he shook his head. "A man that's got a good little shanty-boat sure is plumb comfortable! Time was when I was out in the bleak, turning round and round, so's there'd be one side that wa'n't quite so cold as the otheh!"

Years of saving, years of picking and grubbing down the river had given him his good little boat, with a good ax for wood and a good stove to burn either wood or coal—coal from wrecked tow-barges. He paused in the gale to look with satisfaction at the blue film of smoke curling out of his heater-stove pipe.

"I'm plumb comfy," he shook his head, gratefully. "Seems like a man who's faithful don't get no worst off, but jes' better 'n' better all the time. I slept up the bank and skiffed hit, many a year. Now I got a shanty-boat, an' money to see me clear to N'Orleans—sho!"

He ran down the bank, along his gang-plank onto the bow deck. His hand had reached to open the door by the latch, when he heard a hail from the top of the bank. He turned to look.

A little grizzly man, with long arms—

so long that a foot of wrist and forearm showed between hands and sleeves—was standing on the brink, looking down. The stranger had his face covered with a short, shaggy beard; his eyes were pale, misty blue; he wore only a thin shirt, a pair of old blue overalls, and unmatched shoes.

"Could you let a feller wahm by yo' fiah?" the little wretch whined. "I'm froze up—an' I yain't no place to go!"

Polray hesitated. He scrutinized the man keenly. He did not like the looks of the muddy complexion, the long hands, the flat countenance, the dull, animal stare—but as he looked he saw the human frame swept by a shiver that it was hard to witness. The shiver was real, and the face pinched up grayishly in the cold.

"Come aboard!" Polray invited. "I'd hate to leave a dog out in this wind!"

The man dashed down the bank, leaped nimbly to the deck and entered the cabin. There he extended his hands, his arms, his very body over the hot stove, and there he reveled in the luxury of the warmth.

"Lawse! Lawse!" he chattered. "I been tramplin' down these yere bottoms, an' like to froze to death. I 'low yo'-all's trippin'?"

"Yes—tripping down."

"Cl'ar down to N'Orleans?"

"Likely so."

"A Yankee, I bet!"

"Yes, from New York. I was born there—a long time ago."

"Some of my mother's fambly was Yankees. Down East, suh—Utkiy. Her name were Polray."

"Sho, that's my name!"

"Yo' mean that, suh? Yo' name Polray?" the wretch asked, widening his eyes, as if greatly surprised.

"Yes, Polray. I never knew there was another one in the country. Just my father come from France—"

"Likely hit weren't the same fambly," the other shook his head. "My name's Gurdle, Hess Gurdle. I los' my daddy an' mammy when the Mosden blowed up in Chickasaw Reach. A shanty-boater picked me up. I been on the riveh eveh sinst."

"A good place to be," Polray suggested.

"If yo' got a shanty-boat an' 'nough to eat," the other added. "I been hongry. I ain't now, not much. I had a fine big supper last night. Yassuh! Potatoes an' salt, an' a piece of bacon. Yassuh! A fine supper!"

He smacked his lips, adding afterward:

"Why, I et 'nough to last two, three days!"

"You haven't had anything to eat since last night?" Polray asked, staring, and for the minute forgetting some of his own experiences.

"Hit's seo!"

"We'll have something, d'rectly," Polray said, turning to his kitchen.

He brought out of the grub box a catfish, all cleaned and skinned. He sliced off several steaks. He mixed a batch of biscuit dough. He set the table and put on it real butter, sorghum molasses, knives, forks, and spoons. He put out a pot of coffee, which soon was simmering, while the blue fish smoke made the little man by the stove sniff and grin. Rapidly, with no waste motions, Polray prepared the meal.

They sat down, at last, to an ample dinner, with condensed milk and sugar for the coffee. Gurdle ate his full share, but he did not wolf the things to eat. It seemed to Polray as though he showed remarkable restraint. When he urged the little man to eat more, the guest replied:

"I don' want to rob yo', suh!"

Polray declared his indignation. After

dinner, Polray brought out two pipes and a big box full of tobacco, and they sat down by the fire to smoke. They talked along, and toward dark, Gurdle looked out the window. The river was running yellow, and waves with dirty white caps were breaking up-stream. Gurdle shivered.

"I 'low I betteh be movin' on," he said. "I don't rightly know where'bouts I will lie in to-night, suh. A nice holler tree's good, er under the floor of an old house."

Polray looked out the window. He saw a little motor-boat launch driving down in the edge of the current. Over the bow was a canvas hood, and a sullen man crouched at the wheel in the cockpit. Gurdle rose to his feet.

"I betteh be goin'," he said. "Who yo' reckon that feller is, theh?"

"I don' know," Polray shook his head, leaning to look more keenly, "I never 've se—"

The little man had moved around a bit, leaning to look. He glared at Polray's head, and then deftly lifted out of his hip pocket a yellow slungshot. Just behind the ear, he landed on the skull of the man who had taken him in, fed him, and would shortly have invited him to sleep in a hammock swung across the cabin.

Polray's light went out. His word was cut in two by the foul blow. He dropped to his hands and knees, crying and choking. He fell with a sigh on his side. But ere he lost that last glimmer of consciousness, he realized what had happened, struggled against it and then gave over.

The little man stepped lightly to the bow deck, and waved his hand to the gasoline boat which was driving by. Instantly, the launch turned into the eddy. On it shone a bar of sunlight, the last straight rays of the hour before dark.

The launch swung in beside the cabin-boat, and the steersman made fast to it with ropes, while Gurdle ran up the bank and cast off the mooring lines. In the twilight, they towed the boat out into the stream and pounded into the wind, bound down-river. The wind was falling at the end of the day, as commonly happens. By dark the gale had blown itself out.

Polray lay where he had fallen. The two

men, river pirates, sat by the stove, holding their hands over the fire, to warm them.

"Nice little boat," Gurdle nodded. "Don't no wind come through the sides—Gawd! I like to froze, waitin' to be took on board! The scoundrel wa'n't in no hurry to take me."

"He got his, all right," the other growled. "River man?"

"Yeh—Yankee," the other cackled. "I don't see what they call them Yankees sharp for, d'you?"

"No—they fall fer anything. 'Member that feller in mouth of White River?"

"Had two hundred onto him—sho! Betteh drap him ovehbo'd now, Jim?"

"No hurry. Mus' of rapped him tol'able hard!"

"I neveh take no chances," Gurdle grinned.

"Ner I," the other shook his head. "Reckon I'll jes' sip some coffee."

They each took a cup of coffee. As they sipped it, they looked with fishy eyes at their victim. Colder blooded men there never were than river pirates, and these two were the coldest of their crew.

They went out on the bow deck to look at the bank and stream. The clouds were rolling overhead, and stars were shining frostily out of the sky in the straits between the clouds. Their boats were in mid-stream, gliding with the current. They spoke in voices so low that a hissing whisper would seem like a shout.

"Where 'll we drap him oveh?" Gurdle asked, anxiously.

"No hurry," Jim replied, impatiently.

"He mout come to."

"Agin, he moun't. Hit'd take 'im a week jes' to sit up!" Jim jeered. "What ails yo'?"

"Nuthin'," Gurdle replied, "I don' cyar no more'n yo' do."

They pulled the curtains down and lighted one of the big, broad-based lamps. By its light they searched the prostrate man, methodically, from pocket to pocket. They found his money belt, and extracted, with satisfaction, one hundred and fifty dollars. His pocketbook contained a five-dollar bill and some change. On his finger was a plain gold ring, which they took off.

The loot was satisfactory. Having so much, they began to talk of hurrying to Memphis, or Helena, or Arkansas City. They told one another what that much money would purchase. Best of all, to their minds, was the whisky they would take on board.

Casually, while arguing the subject of what would be the most fun, Jim dragged the prostrate figure out the front door onto the deck. He glanced around, and whispered:

"Too near the bank yere!"

He threw a piece of canvas over the body, remarking that if a steamboat happened along and threw the search-light on them, he didn't want any one to see anything. There was a freezing tang in the air. He entered and closed the door.

Then they debated their good fortune, and what was ahead of them. Fortune had favored them; good luck was coming their way; they could see good times ahead; the cup of pleasure was full; of course, some people might not think as they did, but the world owed them a living.

Suddenly, a shiver and a tremor went through the boat. The two froze where they sat, askant. They heard a click and felt a throb.

"He's wrigglin'!" Gurdle exclaimed. "He's comin' to!"

Like a shadow, Gurdle leaped toward the door, but before he could reach it, the bow of the boat lifted, and they heard a sharp splash. Jim blew out the light, and they rushed onto the platform. The bank was right at hand, as they flanked a bend. Within a yard was the edge of the eddy and the eddy was only a few yards wide.

"I don't see 'im!" Gurdle exclaimed.

"He's drawed down in the sucks," Jim declared. "Save us botherin' to drap him oveh!"

"That's right," Gurdle grinned.

With the shanty-boat oars, they rowed the boats out into the stream in the channel. Little by little they drifted into mid-current and went on their way.

Polray, dazed and blinded, his head aflame, rejoiced in the sting of the cold water. It dashed his eyes open, and it cleared his mind. He struggled with the

river, gaining strength. He washed into the eddy, and crawled up the bank. He climbed to the river bottom, and surged across the level, hunting for a hole to crawl into, out of the cold. He found a straw stack, and bored into it. There he warmed his own den. There he cleared his mind.

He felt for his money belt; it was gone. He had expected that. He felt for his waistcoat, and found it. He had hoped for that. He ran his fingers over the back and over the wet lining. He could feel lines of sewed places and lumps between them.

"They got some of it," he muttered. "They didn't get it all! A man learns not to carry all he's got into one place! Them danged scoundrels! Likely I won't neveh see them agin—but if I do! They's down b'low, and if I do!"

A painful day arrived. He stumbled on down the river bank. He found a little shanty-boat town. He knew some of the river people there. They took him in, and a woman shaved and dressed the lump-wound on his head.

"Who done hit?" she asked.

He told her all that had happened.

"An' when yo'd took 'em in, they robbed yo'! I bet that feller in the launch was Gurdle's pal, yassuh."

"Like 's not. He looked sharp. I seen 'm—to'd my boat."

"If yo' had a launch, likely yo' could get them fellers!" she suggested.

"Likely!" he admitted. "But they'll hide in their holes."

"Er trip, night an' day, for a week!" she said. "Yo' cayn't get out with that head, not in days!"

"I'll thank you kindly, and pay my board," he said. "I'm peaceable—but—"

"I wouldn't blame yo', not if yo' shot them fellers down in cold blood!" she exclaimed, angrily. "They should be, like dogs!"

A week later, Polray ran out of the eddy in a twenty-two foot gasoline launch, with a cabin clear back to the stern. It was a wide boat, and not high in the wind. He steered down-stream, the little motor running freely.

"He's got a good rifle," the shanty-

boaters repeated among themselves, "and a good six-shooter. Them fellers wants to keep clear an' shet of him!"

Up to this time Polray had made no threats; in his own mind he had failed to register any vows or harbor thoughts of vengeance. He regarded the matter of the piracy as "trifling," compared to his own peace of mind. If he worried, his comfort was gone, and he lived on the river for comfort. Yet he was ready for trouble, now. Deep in his soul was an indignation against the abuse of his good nature, kindness, hospitality.

"They need killing!" he said to himself. "I never killed anybody, and I never wanted to kill anybody. But they need killing!"

The ache and pain in his head were constant reminders of the foul blow. Yet the suffering from the pain was less than the other suffering, the feeling that he had been imposed upon. He watched ahead, now, and he searched the river banks as he went down, looking for his cabin-boat.

In New Madrid shanty-boat eddy, he learned that his boat had dropped by there several days before. He knew better than to let it be known that he was after the boat. He recognized it from the description of one of the men, and from the canvas hood launch-cover. At Reelfoot, he was only a day behind them. When he passed under the shadow of Fort Pillow he saw the boats in the morning sunshine a mile ahead, floating down.

He stopped his motor, and drifted with the current, while he thought and planned. The pirates had figured that he was dead, and were taking no precautions. They knew that he had fallen overboard, but they had not counted on the strength which accompanies clean living, the endurance which is the reward of taking care of oneself. He knew that they believed he was dead. The knowledge made him smile.

All day long he floated, sometimes two miles astern; sometimes hardy a mile; he saw other cabin-boats drifting down. He would attract little attention in the migration flight of shanty-boaters, before the winter which was at hand.

Toward night, he came to within a few

hundred feet of the shanty-boat. Gurdle was on the bow, handling the sweeps. He was smoking a pipe—Polray's own pipe, the pursuer thought. In the sunset, Gurdle was silhouetted against the western sky, a thin, shrunken little figure, huddling over the oars.

The other man stepped out on the bow deck. Apparently for no reason, he stumbled as he stood there, lurching against Gurdle, who turned on him savagely. There was feeling between them, that was plain. The fellow whom Polray had seen on the launch was drinking, but Gurdle was sober.

The two began to quarrel; their voices were lifted in vituperation; they faced each other, like spitting cats. Polray, seeing them thus oblivious to their surroundings, glided down close to the stern.

"If they hang me they'll burn you alive!" Polray heard one say. "Who was it always done the hittin' on the haid?"

"Hit were you that were so 'fraid yo' dassen't to hit!" Gurdle swore. "Yo's a coward!"

"An' all I got to do is tell what I know—" the other hinted.

There was a moment's silence. Polray drew up at the stern of his cabin-boat, stepped aboard the deck, revolver in hand. He tiptoed silently through the kitchen into the cabin. As he did so, he heard Gurdle say:

"I kin kill yo' same 's I killed othehs!"

"Yo'—"

The two clashed, and with the smacking of fist blows, Polray heard a sharp, double cracking stroke. He saw Gurdle standing over his victim, striking mad blows with a yellow slungshot.

"Stop! Stop it!" Polray gasped, horror-stricken, stepping into the doorway.

Gurdle looked up and staggered back.

"Gawd! Gawd!" he choked. "Don' touch me, Mr. Ha'nt! Don'—don' touch me, Mr. Ghosts—I—"

The pirate turned, but Polray raised his hand to point at the other man.

"Take him with you!" Polray ordered.

"Yassuh!" the fellow whimpered, "Yassuh!"

Without another word he seized his pal by the collar and threw him over the rail,

and then sprang after. The two struck the cold water together. Gurdle let go, then, and started to swim ashore.

"Come back!" Polray shouted, and with his face twisting and frightened almost to death, the river rat returned to tow his pal toward shore, struggling with the rolling, boiling current.

"Take him all the way!" Polray demanded.

The river rat landed on the bar at Squab Island. Polray saw him shoulder the limp burden and stagger up into the willows.

"Well, I suppose that taught the wretch a lesson!" the shanty-boater mused. "And I've had one, too. What a mess to clean up!"

Polray found nothing on the dirty boat which he regarded as fit to eat, so he ran on down to Mendova eddy, where he landed on the following morning and went up Eddy Street on his way to add to his meager supplies.

As he turned into Main Street, he saw a crowd of people coming. In the lead by twenty yards was Gurdle, still packing the grisly burden on his shoulder like a bag. He was staggering and crying along, his clothes torn to rags, his face scratched where he had crawled through barbed wire fences, and his eyes bulging out of a gray, shrunken face.

His gait was a jog-trot as he hitched along, hardly three inches to a tired step. Polray could hear him breathing, and he remembered that the victim of the Old Man of the Sea must have breathed just like that. While not forgetting his own part in the affair, Polray still pitied the poor devil of a pirate. But Gurdle, stumbling along hitch by hitch, turned his gaze to where Polray stood, silent, bright-eyed, and with an unconscious smile of recognition on his lips—as though he would greet the fellow and reassure him by good nature.

For a moment Gurdle stopped and started. To his countenance mortal fear of the ghost of the man who had been his victim up the Ohio added a bluer gray.

"I'm takin' 'im in!" Gurdle screamed, like a lost soul. "I'm mos' theh! Oh, le' me go! Le' me go!"

And gathering what strength he had left

after that night of terror, toil, and despair, he started with a slow-gathering speed, like a tired horse lumbering under the lash in a muddy road. Faster and faster he ran, while the burden slumped upon his shoulders.

He bounded along, swiftly, like a deer wounded through the heart, seeming to gather strength. Behind him whooped the little mob, trying to keep pace with the sensation.

Two blocks further on, Gurdle crossed Main Street diagonally and turned down Ferry Street. Polray walked that way. As he did so, two men spread behind him and came abreast.

"Howdy?" one greeted. "Off the riveh?"

"Yes."

"Yankee, I expect?"

"Yes—down-easter."

"Know that riveh rat?"

"Up the riveh—I'd seen them."

"That feller knowed you, all right. What's your name?"

"Polray."

"How come hit he knows you?"

"What business is that of yours?" Polray demanded.

"Don't you git excited, Polray. We're bulls, understand?"

"Well, what do you want of me?"

"Witness—that 'll do to hold you!"

Polray glanced down Skiff Street toward the river as they crossed on their way to Ferry Street, where the mob was hesitating at the head of the lane.

"I reckon I'll make a good witness, for a fact," Polray admitted.

"Yeh? How come hit?"

"Gurdle batted me over the head—see that lump?—and I fell overboard. He thought I was dead. He took my shanty-boat, but I followed him and his pal down. I happened along, just when Gurdle killed that other fellow with his slungshot. Gurdle 'lowed I was dead, and I told him to take the—the body with him. I see he's done it!"

"When was that?"

"Yesterday evening, toward sunset—up by Squab Island."

"He's toted that thing down here—twenty-five miles down the levee!" one of

the detectives exclaimed. "Gawd—what a pack to carry all night!"

"He's headed for the morgue," the other plain-clothes man observed.

"He neveh got there!" the other replied, as they turned at the head of the street, where the mob had halted.

Half way down the block, in front of the dirty, dingy, little building for the unclaimed dead was a kind of bundle on the sidewalk, motionless. The morgue keeper walked down the steps, packing a smoke in his goose-neck pipe. He stooped over the figures, to draw a match across his hip, as he studied the situation, which was unique even in his long experience.

The two detectives and Polray walked down the grade, followed doubtfully by the mob.

"Well, skipper?" a detective greeted the man.

"I seen 'em comin'," the morgue keeper shook his head. "I thought the live man was the deadest, 'cordin' to hisn's face. Lawse! I bet Wagon 'll be mad!"

"Why?"

"He gets two dollars fer bringing in anybody that's daid. Hyar's two—that's fo'r dollars. An' they don' need Wagon!"

"Po'r Wagon!" one of the detectives murmured, sympathetically.

"I'll bring the blanket out, an' coveh 'em," skipper said. "Hit ain't legal to touch 'em tell the coroner's had his little look. Friend of the deceased, suh?"

Polray started.

"Not so's yo'd notice hit, skipper," one of the detectives chuckled. "He's got a lump big's a coconut behind his ear where them pirates swatted 'im. He's kind of a witness into the case."

"Sho!" the skipper of the morgue remarked regretfully, "I 'lowed, likely, they'd get to be buried honorable, 'stid of goin' on the table!"

Polray looked along the street and across the Mississippi River. He no longer had any bitterness in his heart; he had entirely forgotten his hurt, and he remembered only that he had survived a needed lesson.

"I couldn't let a good teacher—" he murmured half aloud.

"One of them a school teacher?" a detective asked, quickly. "Lawse! Old Mississippi' takes 'em a long ways down, sometimes! One used to be yo' teacher, Polray?"

"I was just thinking," Polray replied, "perhaps I owe them something!"

Within an hour the coroner had disposed of the case, lumping autopsy, inquest, and decision all in one. Polray's story was all

there was to it. He was frank about it, and no one accused him for his involuntary play of ghost.

Still, they couldn't make it seem out of the way for him to pay the burial expenses of his fellow river men, wretches though they were, and he paid without protest, remarking:

"A man sure owes his teachers something!"



THE TICKLE-TOE

BY JOSEPH BERNARD RETHY

AM I so old—or still so young—
That when you danced the tickle-toe
My soul took umbrage and was flung
In Mitylene long ago?

The moon caressed the head of Pan—
It made a whiteness on the trees,
Across the Doric temple ran
And shone upon the Grecian seas.
The fountains flung their liquid spark
Far into this exotic glow
And made disciples in the park
Seem shadows dancing in the snow.

And soon came swifter figures clad
In garments softer than the wind
And lovelier than any lad,
So wonderfully gay and kind.
With laughter rang the silver glen
Until the bacchant called: "Evoe!"
And all the girls replied and then
They danced and danced the tickle-toe.

They danced all night and in between
Drank wine from carven chalices,
Or strummed upon a tambourine,
Or glided into palaces.
And when the dawn arose that day
And gilded Lesbos, row by row,
The bacchant and her strange array
Were dancing still the tickle-toe.

Though you are young, I am not old—
(Albeit Sappho's songs still blow
Within my heart like trumpets gold).
Come dance with me the tickle-toe!

The Silver Cipher

by Freeman Putney, Jr.)

Author of the "Wuggles" stories, etc.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEAD MAN'S TALE.

I HAVE said that I had conceived an idea regarding the location of the secret chamber whose possible existence had been discovered by Mr. Swink. This idea had not occurred to that gentleman, but to me it seemed a very reasonable one.

According to the story of the old mason who had helped build the air-shaft, the secret chamber was only upon one floor. The corresponding space on the other floors was filled in with brick masonry.

This solid brick masonry would form a very heavy load, and it seemed reasonable to me to believe that such a heavy load would not have been placed above the secret chamber. It was possible, of course, that arches might have been built to sustain it, but obviously the easiest way would have been to build the chamber above, leaving the solid masonry below as a support. I, therefore, decided that the place to seek for the secret room was on the top floor of the house.

With the rest of the family gone for the day, and the coast clear, I sought the third story of Belding Mansion. I had never been up there before, but I found that, the roof being flat, the rooms were supposedly of the same size and shape and finished in the same way as on the lower floors of the building.

The space taken up by the great air-shaft was apparent when you came to measure the dimensions of the various rooms and compare them with the measurements of the house, but so cunningly were the rooms planned that the fact that the air-shaft took away many feet of space from the end of one or the other side of another was not noticeable to the ordinary observer.

I carefully examined the walls of the rooms next to the air-shaft and chimney, but, try as I would, I could find no signs of secret doors or hidden panels. The walls were plastered and papered in ordinary fashion. After spending part of the forenoon in this vain quest, I decided that there was no entrance to the air-shaft or to any secret chamber from the rooms on the third floor. It was possible, of course, that such an entrance might have existed and have been plastered over, but there was no way to investigate this possibility without practically tearing down the walls, which, of course, was out of the question for me.

I decided, therefore, to go down-cellar, climb the air-shaft from the inside, and put to test Mr. Swink's theory of an entrance to the secret chamber from that quarter.

I took with me the lantern that my burglar friend had left behind on the night of his hasty retreat from my room, and I also carried a long chisel from the barn.

Reaching the cellar, I easily found the entrance to the air-shaft, which was closed

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for October 12.

by an ordinary wooden door. The shaft itself measured about four feet by three feet. Its floor was level with that of the cellar where I stood, and by looking up I could see a little square patch of light, where the shaft extended to the top of the building and thence escaped in the form of an apparent chimney.

There in the bricks before me were the iron rungs which formed the ladder that Mr. Swink had described.

Holding my lantern and the chisel both in one hand, I slowly climbed the ladder, at every step closely examining the brickwork. I even tapped it here and there with the heavy handle of the chisel, but all appeared to be perfectly solid until I reached within a few feet of the top of the shaft.

Here I noticed at once a change. The bare brickwork was replaced by a coating of cement or mortar. As I tapped this portion of the wall it gave forth a hollow sound.

What surprised me in this was not the discovery itself so much as the fact that Mr. Swink in his earlier explorations had failed to observe it. I concluded, however, that that gentleman's lack of chin had prevented any great degree of perseverance in his search for the hidden chamber.

So there I was, perched on the high rungs of the ladder and tapping away at a cement wall whose sound certainly promised a vacant space beyond it. But how was I to find the entrance?

I held the lantern carefully to every inch of the wall. Soon I discovered a faint crack, or dividing line, running straight up and down within three inches of the ladder. It proved to be the edge of a door covered with cement like the wall of the shaft itself.

Continuing, I found first the bottom and then the top of the door, close fitting though they were, and then the farther side, which was nearly at the edge of the shaft. But there was neither knob nor latch. Nor could I find anything that looked like a catch or spring.

I pounded the door with the handle of the chisel and thought it shook a trifle at

the top and bottom, although it stood perfectly firm in the middle. Then, looking closer, I found a little hole less than half-way up which had been obscured by cobwebs and so escaped my notice.

Wiping away the cobwebs with my finger, I made a discovery. The hole was a keyhole. Taking out my pocket-knife, I investigated further.

Then a fact flashed upon me with a suddenness that was startling, so well did it bear out the theory of Mr. Swink that Addison Belding had retired to his secret chamber.

There was a key in the lock, placed from within. The door was locked from the inside of the secret chamber!

I did not hesitate about forcing the door, but my chisel was not adequate to the task. The lock was strong and, although rusty, it held.

Quickly descending the ladder, I got a sledge-hammer from the barn, and with this new tool made my way again to the secret door. Then, somewhat awkwardly holding the lantern and clinging to the ladder with one hand, I swung the sledge as hard as I could with the other. Owing to the awkwardness of my position, the first blow was not a fair one. The second, however, landed squarely upon the lock above the keyhole.

There was a crash, a creaking, and the door, which appeared to be a metal framework covered with cement, slowly swung open. The next moment I had stepped from the ladder through the doorway into the secret chamber of Addison Belding.

I believe that if I had not been in a measure prepared for it, the sight which the rays of the lantern revealed would have sent me tumbling out of the room and hastening down the air-shaft in sheer fright. As it was, I confess that I hesitated a moment before advancing farther when the first light from the lantern showed me the interior of that room.

It was small, not more than six by nine feet. The interior was not of masonry, as I had expected to find it, but floor, walls, and ceiling were sheathed with wood. There must have been some connection with the ventilating-shaft, for the room

was dry—very dry. The dust of many years was there. Floor and the walls were gray with it.

Toward the back of the room, but squarely in front of me, was a dry, withered corpse, hanging by its neck from a beam in the ceiling. It hung absolutely motionless, for there was no air in the place to stir it. The face was toward me, with the parched skin, or what there was left of it, drawn away from the skull, with its great eyeholes staring at me and its white teeth gleaming.

In front of this hanging figure was a small but massively built table of dark wood. At the table, to the right, and partly facing me, was seated in a high-backed chair another man, dressed, and with his hat on. He leaned partly on the table, and a book was in front of him. Apparently it was some sort of a record-book.

And from the witheredness of this second man, and the way he sat all crumpled, I knew that he was dead, too.

I shuddered, and wished for a moment that I could go away. But my task was before me, and I had too many enemies who were alive to allow me to be afraid of the dead. So I stepped farther into the room, and as I did so, I noticed that, dark and brown and gray as the place was, the air in it was clean and dry.

Then I put my hand on the sleeve of the man at the table, and a piece of the cloth came away in my hand, leaving beneath it a dry bone! And as I touched it he swayed forward a bit, and his head slipped from beneath his rotting hat, and I saw his face.

And his face, like that of the man who was hanging, had the blank holes and gleaming teeth of a skull. And I knew that the two had been dead for many years.

My mind seemed numb as I stood there, and for a minute or two I could not think. But before me I dully saw that there were other things beside the record-book upon the table. There was a wine-bottle, uncorked, and empty long ago. Beside it were two glasses and a tiny vial.

Two dead men in the secret chamber of Addison Belding! One, I believed, was old

Addison Belding himself, who, summoned from his fireside, had left his house, gone out into the night, returned secretly to the cellar, and climbed the ladder to his secret place.

But who was the other? And which was Addison Belding? Here was one man sitting in a chair as if he had gone to sleep over his writing, held up by the table. And there was the other hanging from the ceiling, strangled by the neck, as one who had died the death of a dog.

The death of a dog!

Then it was that my brain flashed into working order again, and there came back to me the oath which Addison Belding and his three friends had sworn to at the bedside of Old Scratchy, the hermit of Middle Island:

" . . . That if any one . . . shall break his oath, the others . . . individually or together . . . shall punish him by inflicting upon him death . . . a dog's death by hanging. . . . "

Then it was that I knew who the man had been whose dried skeleton hung in his old-fashioned garments on the other side of the heavy table.

It was Winfred Whipper, the owner of the fourth ring, and the man who had broken his oath and murdered Old Scratchy, the hermit!

And the other thing seated at the table I believed had been in life Addison Belding! The man who had lived his life and grown rich and built Belding Mansion, but over whom, through the latter part of his life, had hung the thought that he had not carried out his promise to punish Win Whipper!

But how, if the horrible thing had happened as I believed, and Addison Belding had avenged the death of Old Scratchy by finally hanging his murderer—how had it ever been accomplished? How had he ever succeeded in luring Win Whipper up that steep ladder and into that secret room?

"How?" I repeated aloud.

Then, as I repeated the question aloud, my eyes fell upon the record-book lying on the table. I set down the lantern and picked up the book. Opening it, I found

that several pages had been torn out and folded to form a note. A worn lead pencil also dropped from the book. The note, or letter, was addressed on the outside to

MRS. ADDISON BELDING.

For her eye alone.

Now, much as I disliked to disobey the instruction of the dead man that this letter was for his wife, that good lady had been many years in her grave, and I saw no way for me but to unfold the pages and read what was written there.

And this was the letter:

MY BELOVED:

I do not know that these lines will ever reach your eyes, and I hope in large measure that they may not, that this secret room of mine may never be discovered, and that some day fire may burn down the mansion and destroy every vestige. But lest discovery may come, I am writing these lines that you may know what has occurred, and that, perhaps, I may be justified before you. I only wish I knew whether I am now justified before my conscience and my God.

As you know, beloved, many years ago I swore an oath to avenge the death of Old Scratchy, the hermit, upon the person of his murderer, Winfred Whipper. You know that for many years that oath has weighed heavily upon my life, that it has been upon my conscience, and that I have spent my time and my substance seeking everywhere for Win Whipper.

You did not know that I had this secret room prepared against the chance that Win Whipper might finally come to me. I had made my plans, if he did come, to lure him to this room and execute him, according to the oath which we took so many years ago on Middle Island.

Not long ago you told me that if I, your husband, fulfilled my oath, and thus became, as you styled it, a murderer myself, I must not come back to you. I have spent the happier years of my lifetime with you; I have been faithful to you, and I have tried in many things—I believe in most things—to do what you have wished. When you told me, however, that you would not take me back if I carried out my oath to execute Win Whipper, you placed another weight upon my heart. I do not blame you for this, beloved; but I am writing so that you may know and understand why I am sitting here, and why I have locked the door.

To-night the man who called me from the house was Win Whipper. For years I have had a vague feeling that he would come, and I knew what would be his object. He wanted to sell me his silver ring with its portion of the cipher. When he summoned me out of doors I talked to him briefly, and he disclosed his object in coming

back. He had led a life of dissipation and was without money. He wanted to sell me his silver ring. Without alarming him I told him that the business must be done in secret, and lured him up the ladder to this secret room. The wine I took from the cellar, and gave him a glass in which was a drug, which I had long kept for this very emergency. It put him to sleep, and while he slept I tied the rope about his neck, lifted him to the table, fixed the rope about the beam, and then pushed him off. He is now hanging there dead.

There is nothing more in life for me. I cannot come back to you, my beloved; but I have kept my word and have fulfilled my oath. That part of the weight which has been hanging over me is now lifted. But I have locked the door on the inside, and the rest of the drug is in the little vial, and there is enough to kill me. I shall take it in a glass of wine. May the Lord have mercy on my soul.

ADDISON BELDING.

So this was the deed which old Addison Belding had done, and of which his wife had been afraid. This was the deed which, in her anxiety to prevent, she had told him if he accomplished, he must never come back to her.

I laid the book and the pitiful letter back upon the table. I had not the heart to touch anything else there.

But as I cast the rays of the lantern on the floor, I noticed beneath the table a small object, which I picked up. It was dusty in my hands, but to my surprise I found that it was a crumpled wad of paper money, the greenback currency of the Civil War period.

Inside was a small, hard object, and, pulling open the wad, I found in my hand a silver ring!

Money and ring evidently represented the bargaining for which the two men had ostensibly come to this secret room; but how the money and ring had been crumpled together and flung beneath the table I could not, of course, explain. My guess was that at the last moment Addison Belding had flung them from him in disgust.

Win Whipper's ring! I now had three out of the four parts needed to complete the silver cipher!

Somehow I could not bear to touch the money, even for Hester Belding, and I threw it back upon the floor, promising myself that somehow I would make up the amount to her.

Then, with the ring in my pocket, I left that place. I pulled shut the door as far as I was able, and made my way down the ladder, through the cellar, and out into God's sunlight, which you may be assured I was glad enough to see.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SECRET OF THE CIPHER.

NOW I was not long after reaching my room in examining the silver ring which I had taken from the secret chamber. It proved to be so very like my grandfather's ring that I had no doubt it was one of the four given to the four holders of the silver cipher by Old Scratchy, the hermit.

Like my grandfather's ring, and like the ring in Simon Flex's possession, whose cipher Mr. Swink had copied and given to me, the seal bore an inscription of twelve letters, as follows:

G	H	R	E
U	S	W	E
I	N	T	F

So then I had what I believed to be three parts of the cipher, each consisting of twelve letters. I spent the afternoon working over them and trying to evolve a meaning from them, but it was too much of a puzzle, and I was forced to conclude that I still needed the cipher of the fourth ring to complete the task of learning the secret.

Now, the fourth ring I believed to be that which had belonged to old Addison Belding. What had become of it I did not know, because I had not been able to induce Hester Belding or her aunt to talk about it.

But that evening, when the family had returned, I determined to bring up the subject once more with Hester, and see if I could not get her to talk at last. Accordingly, when the evening work was done, I caught her in the kitchen and boldly opened up the forbidden subject.

Now, it had been coming upon me more and more during the time when I had been recovering from my encounter with the

burglar, that Hester Belding meant a great deal to my life. I had told her long before that I loved her, and her answer had been the slipper which she flung in my face. I had no idea whether she still believed that I had made love to her simply to wheedle from her the knowledge of her grandfather's ring, and whether she still thought I was working on behalf of Fannie Flex and Fannie's father.

During my illness she had kept away from me, save when others were about, behaving strictly like a very properly bred young lady. And so as I came into the kitchen again this night and found her putting away the dishes, with her sleeves rolled up and her pretty neck bare, there came over me such a great hunger for the girl that I cared nothing for her grandfather's silver ring, or the secret cipher, or for Captain Kidd's hidden treasure. All I cared for was Hester Belding, and I wanted her more than I wanted anything else in the world; more, indeed, than the whole world put together.

But Hester stood looking at me with cool surprise in her eyes, and for the life of me I could not repeat the careful speech which I had prepared to lead up to the subject of her grandfather's silver ring. What I did say was this:

"Hester, I told you one night early in the summer that I loved you. You called me a clumsy brute who was trying to get your grandfather's ring by foul means. To-night—"

"David," she interrupted, "I do not want to talk any more about that."

"Nevertheless, Hester, you must hear me out this once, and then I shall be through. I am going to tell you the meaning of your grandfather's ring. It was one of four given to him and three friends years ago, when they were boys, by an old hermit. The four rings combined bore the key to the hiding-place of part of the treasure of the pirate Captain Kidd, which was buried on Middle Island, in Hardyport Harbor."

"David," she interrupted again, "I tell you plainly and flatly you cannot get my grandfather's ring."

"Hester Belding," I returned, "I am not asking you for your grandfather's ring."

Furthermore, I will tell you plainly that I have discovered to-night that I do not want it."

"Do not want it? What do you mean?"

"Just this: I started out from Hardyport in my search for the four rings to combine the cipher, and obtain the treasure. To-night I have two of the rings, my grandfather's and Win Whipper's, and a copy of the cipher on that which originally belonged to Jacob Flex, and is now in possession of his son, Simon Flex."

"And you want my grandfather's ring to complete the cipher, and that is why you are making love to—"

"Stop, Hester! You are going to listen to me this time! There is just one fact in the world for me to-night, and that is that I love you! As for your grandfather's ring, whether you know where it is or not, I am willing to let it go. All I know is that there is no use in my staying here at Belding Mansion under present conditions any longer. You are all I want, and to prove it—"

"And to prove it?" she repeated.

"To prove it," I repeated, "I am going to give you these."

She took the package, and asked: "What are they?"

"They are the two rings, Hester, which I have already discovered, and a copy of the cipher of the third. You may have them and do as you please with them. If you know where your grandfather's ring is, the four combined will probably give you the secret of Captain Kidd's treasure, and you may go and dig it up for yourself. Or—"

"Or what?"

"Or you may throw them all in the fire. As for me, I will own that I wish they had all been in a hotter fire than this earth can ever kindle before they came between you and me, Hester Belding, to break up our friendship!"

She had undone the package, and was examining the two rings and the copy of the third cipher.

"David," she said slowly, and her voice was strained, "do you mean what you say, that I may destroy these things?"

"I do."

With that, while I stood still, she walked across the room, took up the stove lifter, and dropped the two silver rings and Mr. Swink's paper into the kitchen stove.

"And now, David!" she said, as she came back to where I was.

"And now, Hester," I repeated, "now that the rings and the cipher to Old Scratchy's treasure are no longer between us, will you please believe me when I tell you that I love you?"

"Do you remember, David, the other night, when you were in this room? You told me you were going to keep my slipper until I asked you for it, and that when I asked you for it I should have to take you with it."

"That was what I said, Hester."

"Well, David," she returned slowly, "you may bring back my slipper."

But I had something else to do just then which was even more pleasant. And I may confess that that evening we sat together on the back piazza, with time forgotten and not once thinking of Old Scratchy's silver rings, or the secret cipher, or Captain Kidd's treasure, all of which I had given up for the sake of winning Hester Belding.

But the next morning, when I came to consider my affairs, I awoke to the fact that I had had a long vacation from work, and that an engaged man with a sunny-haired girl promised to be his wife, must be getting back to business. So I told Hester that I had decided to get back to Hardyport and take up my old position.

She said little at that time, but that afternoon, when the boarders were all out of the way, Hester called me to a corner of the sitting-room, where stood an old-fashioned desk, and there on the desk, to my surprise, lay the two silver rings and the soiled paper bearing the Flex cipher which I had received from Mr. Swink.

"Hester—" I began.

She laughed.

"There was no fire in the kitchen stove last night, you great silly," she explained. "I ran down and rescued the things after you went to bed, and now I am going to show you something else." She turned her back for a moment and fumbled at the bosom of her dress.

The next minute there lay in my hand old Addison Belding's silver ring.

Many weeks before, in the tomb in the Hardyport churchyard, I had noted the deadly chill of the first silver ring that had come into my possession. Now I noted, by contrast, the live warmth of this one. And there was a bit of narrow, blue ribbon attached to it.

"I have been wearing it around my neck all the time," confessed Hester.

Well, I scolded her a bit for deceiving me, and then we both examined the ring. It was like the others, save that the cipher read as follows:

T	U	E	E
E	T	H	S
P	E	C	F

So now we had the four portions complete of Old Scratchy's cipher. But it took us that afternoon and most of the evening to work out the interpretation.

We tried one method after another, in which I found Hester's mind much more nimble than my own, but time after time we arrived at only another meaningless jumble of letters.

Finally we gave up hit-or-miss experimenting and began a systematic try-out of various methods of combining the letters of the four rings. One method which seemed promising was to take a letter from each ring in succession. The difficulty here, of course, was to arrange the rings in their proper sequence.

Finally, however, we reached a point where we had the ciphers arranged in the following order:

By taking the first letter from each ring we obtained "D I G T."

"We've got it!" exclaimed Hester. "We've got it!"

"Got it!" I echoed. "I don't see any sense in that."

"D I G!" she exclaimed. "The first three letters spell 'dig.' Go ahead!"

So we took the second letter of each ring in the same order, added the line, and got "D I G T W O H U."

"Dig two!" exclaimed Hester. "The H U is the beginning of another word."

Then we continued by the same method

until finally the four rings gave us this message:

Dig two hundred feet due east of white stripe in east cliff.

"But what does it mean?" asked Hester.

"It means," I explained, "that this is the message of Old Scratchy, the hermit, showing the hiding-place of Captain Kidd's treasure on Middle Island. The cliffs in that vicinity are all granite, but you will often find a stripe of colored rock running through, as if the granite had cracked and been filled up with some other molten material in prehistoric times. It is evidently to some such natural landmark on a cliff on the eastern shore of Middle Island that this message refers."

"Then we will go to Hardyport and dig it up!" exclaimed Hester.

It occurred to me that for a young lady who had not long before declined even to discuss the matter of the silver rings, Hester showed a remarkable interest in Captain Kidd's treasure, and I told her so.

The only reward I got for my pains was a cool silence, so I concluded that with Hester, like myself, now that our love affair was settled, material things, even in the form of a pirate's treasure, were not to be overlooked.

It was late again before we parted for the night, and when we did so I gave back to Hester the three rings and the cipher. I thought that in her own house, with various places where she could lock them up, they would be safer in her possession than in mine; but, as it happened, I never saw them again.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PLACE OF THE TREASURE.

LOOKING backward with the knowledge that is far beyond what any foresight can give, I now perceive that it would have been wiser to have started at once for Middle Island to seek for the buried treasure of Captain Kidd. But there was no particular reason why I did not do this.

I had not told Hester Belding anything about the secret chamber in the air-shaft,

nor of my gruesome discovery of the skeletons of her grandfather, old Addison Belding and the traitor, Win Whipper. I did desire, however, to get those skeletons out of the place and give them proper burial, for I could not bear to think of their keeping their horrible watch there unsuspected under the same roof that sheltered the girl who had promised to be my wife.

The summer season was now practically over, and the last of the boarders was expected to depart on Saturday. I figured that, with them out of the house, I could induce Hester and her aunt, Miss Ann Bellows, to go away somewhere for the day, and that during their absence Mr. Swink and I could get the skeletons out of the house and bury them safely somewhere in the woods. For this reason I delayed my intended trip to Hardyport.

Now, that Saturday morning I was in a loft in the upper part of the barn, engaged with Mr. Swink in repairing part of a harness, when Hester came out and told me that Simon Flex had called at the house and was asking to see me.

"Simon Flex! Where is he?" I asked.

"I left him in the sitting-room waiting for you," she answered.

"Does he wear a mustache?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied.

Now, I had no wish to meet Mr. Simon Flex, not having any further use for him. Still, I owed the gentleman a bill with several items in it for the various mean tricks he had played upon me, and I immediately thought that here was an opportunity to avenge myself in some small degree, and also to satisfy my curiosity upon a certain point which I had been wishing for some time to have made clear. So I said to Hester:

"Will you please bring me from the house the sharpest pair of scissors you have, and then will you tell Mr. Flex that I am busy out here, and that if he wishes to come here I shall be pleased to see him?"

Hester brought me the scissors, innocently supposing they had something to do with my work on the harness. Then she returned to the house to send out my caller.

It was not a pleasant day—not rainy, but with a hint of drizzle in the air, and

so it happened that when Mr. Simon Flex appeared in the workshop, he settled, even before he spoke, one of the mysteries which I had wished to solve.

He wore a long raincoat, one far from new and showing evidence of much use. As I looked at the pattern, I recognized it instantly.

It was of a very dark blue, almost black, in color, and through it ran a little checked pattern in reddish-brown. I was absolutely certain that it matched the shred of cloth I had found at the gate of Hardyport cemetery when my grandfather's tomb was broken open, and the other fragment which I had torn from the sleeve of the midnight intruder at Mr. Swink's hut the first night I came to Mylesham.

Simon Flex was tall and spare. His face was sallow. His eyes were large and black and too closely set together to suit me. He wore a black mustache. A large, somewhat irregularly shaped nose, flat ears, and a forehead stretching up into a partly bald head, of which the remaining hair was stiff and black, with a mouth that looked both unscrupulous and cruel, completed his portrait. It may have been prejudice that caused me to make such an unfavorable reading of his features, but whatever the reason, I have told the impression he made on me.

Mr. Flex made a move as if to shake hands, but as I appeared to be very busy with the harness, he apparently thought better of it.

"Can't I see you alone, Mr. Adams?" he asked.

"I am very busy," I returned. "I think there is no business you can have with me that Mr. Swink cannot hear."

He scowled.

"As you please," he returned. "I am a business man and I will get down to business. I know why you are here in Mylesham."

"So?"

"I do. You came seeking a certain silver ring. I came here to-day, thinking perhaps I could make a deal with you, but from your attitude I can see that this is impossible, so I will bid you good day."

Now this astonished me not a little that

Simon Flex should be willing to give up so easily the object of his visit. Later I understood to my sorrow, the reason for his complacency. At the moment I only said:

"Hold on, Mr. Flex!"

"Why should I hold on? I thought you did not desire to do any business with me."

"I do not wish to do any business with you of the kind you desire, but I have a little business of my own to transact with you, Mr. Flex."

"You have! What is it?"

I had stepped close to him by now and so I merely replied:

"Just this."

And with that I thrust my leg behind his knee and toppled him backward to the floor. The next moment I was sitting on his chest and holding him down.

Mr. Flex used language which was not a credit to his early training and threatened me with many things, to which I paid no attention.

"Now Mr. Swink," I directed, "you will kindly bring that pair of sharp scissors which Miss Hester brought from the house and while I hold this gentleman still, you will clip off his mustache."

And despite Mr. Flex's assurances that he would put us both in jail and sue us for damages, and murder us in the bargain, Mr. Swink, who, I think, enjoyed the task, brought the scissors and between us we managed to deprive Mr. Flex of the heavy dark mustache he had worn.

And, as I expected, we found beneath it a crescent-shaped scar so dark that I did not wonder the old lady at Hardyport, Mrs. Clark, had described it as a "blue scar." This was the final evidence for me that Simon Flex was the man who had broken into my grandfather's tomb.

I told him so and he cursed me. But even as he went away, I had an odd feeling that the man was somehow satisfied with his day's work.

If I had had at the time any idea of the reason for this, he would not have escaped from the barn so easily as he did. As it was, he went away after losing his mustache but having gained something of infinitely more value.

Monday morning, at my suggestion,

Hester and her aunt, Miss Anne Bellows, took advantage of their freedom from the responsibility of the boarders for a little trip into Boston.

While they were gone, Mr. Swink and I made our way to the secret chamber in the airshaft and removed the two skeletons. We placed them in two wooden caskets which we had constructed and concealing them in a wagon under what appeared to be a blanket and a feed of hay for the horses, we drove to a wood-lot owned by the Beldings several miles away, where Mr. Swink was accustomed to cut firewood. There, in a thicket, we buried Win Whipper and Addison Belding in separate graves.

Mr. Swink, when the interment was finished, produced from his pocket an old prayer-book, from which he slowly read the burial service, and I will do him the credit to say that he performed this far better than I could have done it.

That evening after our return, Hester, with a very troubled face, called me into the sitting-room.

"Did you take the silver rings, David?" she asked.

"The silver rings!" I repeated. "I didn't even know where they were."

"They were locked in the little drawer of this desk," she explained, "and now see!"

She threw open the drawer and it was empty.

"Who could have stolen them?" she asked.

I examined the drawer and its lock. The latter was of the useless kind so frequently found on furniture and which opens to the touch of almost any key.

Then I remembered the air of suppressed satisfaction with which Simon Flex had left after our encounter in the barn.

"It was Simon Flex!" I exclaimed. "You will remember that he waited here while you came out to tell me of his call and while you were getting the scissors for me. Evidently he made the best of his opportunity."

"It doesn't really matter," suggested Hester. "We have the message of the rings and know it by heart. Perhaps Mr. Flex won't be able to decipher it."

"I am afraid that is cold comfort," I

returned. "The chances are that when Simon Flex's father left him his own ring he also told him the method of combining the four. I have little doubt that he was able to decipher the secret message within a short time after he obtained the four rings."

"Then we must hurry — hurry!" exclaimed Hester. "If we don't, Mr. Flex will get ahead of us."

"We can't start before morning, now," I returned. In my heart I was pretty well discouraged, for I had no hope that Simon Flex, once the message was before his eyes, would delay in making his way to Middle Island. He had two days' start of us and at that very moment might have finished digging for the treasure of Captain Kidd, whose place of concealment had been discovered by Old Scratchy, the hermit, so many years before.

So it was with somewhat heavy hearts that the next morning Hester and I took the first train to Boston, crossed the city, and at the North Station took a train for Hardyport.

Arriving at my old home town, we hastened to the steamboat wharf where the towboats, or as we called them, the steam-tugs, are usually tied up when not engaged in their work of towing vessels in the harbor. Here I found the tug Hannah in charge of an old friend of mine, Captain Swinson. I told the captain that I wanted him to take us to Middle Island.

"What's the matter with Middle Island these days?" asked Captain Swinson.

"What do you mean?"

"What I mean is, why do so many people want to go there these days? Only day before yesterday there was a feller down here from Boston wanted to hire me to take him out there."

"What kind of a looking man was he?" I asked.

"Tall, kind of thin, black hair, and had a dark scar like the fluke of an anchor on his upper lip."

"Simon Flex!" exclaimed Hester and I together.

"That is right," agreed the captain. "Come to think of it, that is the name he gave me."

"Did you take Mr. Flex to the island?" asked Hester.

"I did not. There is no wharf there where the tug could land and I told him he had better get a small boat. He hired a motor-boat finally."

"And did you see him come back?" I questioned.

"I didn't notice him. But he wasn't around the wharves yesterday nor this mornin', so I guess he did his business and got away."

I looked at Hester doubtfully.

"We'd better go to the island, anyway," she said.

I agreed with her, but Captain Swinson, when I repeated my request that he transport us there in a tug, made the same reply that he had given Mr. Flex, that there was no wharf where he could land and it was better for us to hire a small boat.

So we followed his advice and by means of a motor-boat, skippered by a Portuguese who spoke only broken English, we finally reached Middle Island.

I ordered the Portuguese to stay with the boat while Hester and I made our way ashore.

We clambered along the rocks across a beach covered with pebbles, past the light-house, and finally reached the cliff at the eastern end of the island.

"This must be the East Cliff referred to in the cipher," I said. "Now let us find the white stripe in it."

"There it is!" exclaimed Hester pointing.

Sure enough, there in the dark granite was what looked to be a cleft, perhaps two or three feet wide, which had been filled in, probably thousands of years ago, with lighter colored stone, forming a white stripe in the face of the cliff. We hastened to the foot of the stripe. I set down there a pocket compass which I had brought across and we both looked due east.

Then Hester uttered an exclamation of dismay which was echoed in my own heart.

"Why!" she exclaimed, "two hundred feet east of the white stripe is nothing but water!"

Sure enough, the East Cliff was close to the edge of the island. Less than two rods

of solid ground extended from its foot, beyond which was sheer drop to the water.

The place indicated by the secret cipher as the hiding place of Old Scratchy's treasure was deep water, the deep water of the channel itself, for we had seen a schooner float its way over the spot while we were coming across the island.

As we stood staring in blank amazement, an old man with a gray beard came out of the lighthouse and made his way toward us. He was evidently the keeper of the light.

"Goin' to fish for cunners?" he asked as he drew near.

"To tell the truth, no," I returned. "We were looking for a spot two hundred feet due east of this white stripe in the cliff, but it seems to be out there in the channel."

The old man chuckled.

"You're the second fellar that's been lookin' for that spot," he returned. "The other fellar came day before yesterday and he was real het up about it. Seemed to think I was responsible for it. He got so sassy that I wouldn't even tell him why he was disappointed."

"Oh, tell me what you know!" Hester exclaimed.

The old man looked at her and chuckled. "Simple enough," he returned. "You came about ten years too late, that's all. Middle Island used to extend a way further out. About ten years ago the government decided to widen the channel and chopped off fifty fathom or so."

Which meant that the hiding place of Old Scratchy's treasure had long ago been blasted into pieces and in all probability the fragments had been carried out to sea and dumped.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PIRATE TREASURE.

HESTER and I were two rather sober young people as the Portuguese boatman ferried us back to the wharf in Hardyport.

But Hester, as I had already found, was a girl who made a practise of looking on the bright side of things. As we landed she said:

"Just think, David, how much worse we would have felt if Simon Flex had really found the treasure ahead of us and taken it away!"

This was cold comfort but it did make me a little more cheerful and as we walked up Harbor Street, we were discussing plans for our future.

"The only difference now," said Hester, "is that instead of being partners in a treasure that somebody else buried, we shall have to be partners in working hard for a few years and piling up a treasure of our own."

We went up to the home of my old boarding mistress, Mrs. Clark, as I wished her to see Hester and to have Hester know the interesting old lady.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Clark. "So this is your young lady is it, David? Or maybe it isn't your young lady. I'm always opening my mouth."

"You are right this time, Mrs. Clark," I returned. "Hester is certainly my young lady, as you put it. We want to have you ask us to supper and then we will go back to Boston and take the late train to her home in Mylesham."

"Bless me! I certainly have missed you since you went away, David! It must be four months or maybe five months. And as I told the man who came to see you yesterday—"

"A man came to see me yesterday?"

"Yes, Mr. Worthington, the lawyer. As I told him, you were so quiet when you were here that I never thought I should miss you when you were away."

"What did Mr. Worthington want to see me about?"

"I don't know for certain, David, but I think it was something about Captain Sylvanus Bratt's death. Or, maybe—"

"Captain Sylvanus Bratt dead!" I exclaimed. "When did he die? Why didn't you let me know about it?"

"He died late last Friday night. Or maybe it was very early Saturday morning. I asked the man down to the drug-store to let you know and he said he would telegraph you. Or maybe he said he would telephone you. Didn't you get the message?"

"I certainly did not. Captain Bratt dead! I can hardly realize it."

"No more can I. And when this Mr. Worthington, the lawyer, called last night and wanted to see you, I told him 'David isn't here.' Or maybe I just said you was in Mylesham. Anyway, he said he would be down and see you. I think he was goin' to Mylesham this morning. Or maybe—"

"If he went to Mylesham to-day, we must have passed him on the way," said Hester. "What do you suppose he wanted, David?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Clark. "If there isn't Mr. Worthington coming in the gate now!"

The lawyer was a large, smooth-faced individual, whose dignified walk and grave features had always held me in considerable awe in my boyhood days. Mrs. Clark hastened to show him into the parlor.

"Ahem!" began Mr. Worthington. "David—er—Mr. Adams—er—I called to see you on business, that is—er—rather personal."

"This young lady and I are engaged to be married," I replied. "Mrs. Clark has been almost like a mother to me for many years. You may speak before both of them, I think."

"Very well! Er—you have heard, I presume, of the death of Captain Sylvanus Bratt?"

"I have only just heard. I am awfully sorry to learn of it."

"Quite natural—er—quite natural! Captain Sylvanus was an old man. Like yourself, I was grieved at his death but not very much surprised. Mr. Adams, I am the executor of Captain Bratt's will."

"Indeed?"

"He died leaving absolutely no relatives. You know that he and your grandfather were friends for many years, do you not?"

"I have heard of it and Captain Bratt has told me more than once how much he thought of my grandfather."

"Good! Very good! Therefore, it should be no surprise to you to learn that Captain Bratt in his will made you his sole heir and left you his entire fortune."

"For Heaven's sake! I exclaimed.

"Goodness!" said Hester.

"Bless me!" cried Mrs. Clark.

"Quite so," continued Mr. Worthington. "And Captain Bratt also left a sealed letter addressed to you, David—Mr. Adams—which I, as his executor, was instructed to deliver to you. Here it is."

"Open it! Read it!" exclaimed Hester.

Which I accordingly did, with that young lady hanging over my shoulder.

Captain Bratt's last letter to me was as follows:

MR. DAVID ADAMS,

Hardyport.

RESPECTED YOUNG FRIEND:

When you read this I shall be put away, if not in Davy Jones's locker, at least in some place where I am likely to stay just as long. I have made my will and have left you all my property. I figure it may run two hundred thousand dollars. At any rate, I could liquidate it for that. The lawyers and the courts and the tax collectors will probably shave it some before you get it; but even at that there ought to be enough to keep you out of the poorhouse for the rest of your life.

David, I am leaving you this money hoping it will do you more good than it has me. But I am also leaving it to you that I may, if possible, ease my conscience, which has bothered me not a little all these years; and particularly has it bothered me ever since the afternoon when you called on me and I spun you the yarn of Old Scratchy, the hermit of Middle Island, and the treasure that was buried there.

I did not tell you the whole of that story, David.

When I found Old Scratchy dying in his cabin, after he had been struck down by Win Whipper, the old man told me the hiding place of his treasure. He told me if he died to dig it up and divide with Henry Adams and Addison Belding. Old Scratchy died, as you know. I found the treasure of Captain Kidd secure in its hiding place, two hundred feet east of the white stripe in the East Cliff. The money amounted to thirty thousand dollars.

Henry Adams was away fishing, and Addison Belding lived in Boston. I struggled with temptation for a while, and then, to my everlasting disgrace, I yielded to it.

I kept the whole of Old Scratchy's treasure.

It gave me my start in life; furnished me with funds to buy my first vessel, and, as you know, I worked hard and piled up the dollars. I suppose I am a leading citizen of the town to-day, but what good does it do me?

I never married. I was too busy making money. Other men of my age have their children and their grandchildren. I am alone in the world. For years I did not think very much about having

stolen the shares that belonged to Henry Adams and Addison Belding, but it came home to me when your grandfather worried himself to death. It was too late for me to tell him the truth.

The only thing left for me to do, David, is to leave my money to you. It has been a curse to me. Do not do as I did. In your youth do not sacrifice friends to dollars, only to find in your old age that you cannot swap dollars for friends.

I suppose I should add some counsels of prudence to you as to taking proper care of your fortune after you receive it; but I must tell the truth, and will say that I don't care a damn what you do with it. I am sick of the whole mess; sick of the whole trip, and my only comfort is that I must be pretty near to reaching port, where I will get my final discharge; but if the blessing of a cross-grained old miser is of any value to you, then know that it goes with the money, David Adams.

Yours sincerely,

SYLVANUS BRATT.

(The end.)

So it was, that after my disappointments and my long hunt that ended where it began, I at last became possessed of the pirate's treasure left by Old Scratchy, the hermit of Middle Island, and very greatly increased by Captain Sylvanus Bratt through his lifetime of industry and careful saving.

Hester and I have tried to make wise use of our fortune. And when I look about our home, I feel that the blessing of Captain Bratt did indeed come to us with the money.

And our greatest blessing is, as the old minister said, "a little one." We had intended to name it after Captain Sylvanus Bratt, but circumstances were such that we called it "Hester," after its mother.



An Unwilling Pythias

by C. Sharpe

TUBBY walked around the library twice, then, doubling on his tracks, went half-way back and entered the basement. In the basement was the zoological laboratory, and he was greeted by a strong odor of formaldehyde with a fainter suggestion of something fishy. The class in zool. B1 was dissecting pickled sharks. It filled him with a distinct nausea, but he held his course.

He crossed the laboratory a little rapidly, not pausing to exchange repartee with any of the shark investigators, who desired to

know variously where he was going, whom he was looking for, whether the bell had rung, why he wasn't at football practise, and whether he wished a light lunch of shark.

He went unerringly to the corner of the room from which the professor was furthest removed, and climbed across one of the dissecting-tables. This resulted in a smothered shriek from Isabel Ottify, who was engaged there in her gruesome business, but it brought him to an open window. Through it he clambered, and, reaching the lawn

without, looked about cautiously. There was no one in sight, and with a look of deep relief he made his way around the building, unheeding Miss Ottify's bitter recriminations to the effect that he had caused her to gouge a chunk from her spinal cord.

In the library Tubby obtained volume eleven of the "Encyclopedia Britannica," and began a diligent search for the word *Iceland*. When it presently became apparent to him that he had the wrong volume he closed it with a bang and started to rise from his chair, with the intention of seeking the right volume. This intention was never carried out.

As he raised his eyes, he perceived that some one was seated in the chair opposite. With a murmur of dismay he sank back and gazed at her, a look of keen distress growing on his face. How long she had been there he did not know. She said nothing. She simply sat, her large brown eyes fixed on his face. After an interval he broke the painful silence.

"Well, now, Bee," he said.

"Well, now, what?" she said by way of reply. They spoke aloud, though in a low tone, for the librarian's assistant—she was a sophomore—was in the very furthest alcove talking with Stan Gregory.

The conversation lagged. They stared across the table at one another, and though she was very well worth staring at, Tubby's expression as he stared, was distinctly unhappy. The silence grew oppressive; to Tubby it was decidedly unpleasant. Finally he spoke again, and his tone was peevish.

"Well, whata you want?"

The spell of silence was lifted from her. She leaned across the table and spoke rapidly.

"You know what I want," she said. "I want you to let Buster in the game. You can just as well as not, Tubby; you know you can. What're you captain for if you can't put in who you want to? And if you're going to say you *don't* want to—"

"Oh, Bee," said Tubby wearily, "I've told you about a thousand times, it seems to me. I can't help it if he can't *play*. He's too light. He never should 'a' tried out for football at all. Web says—"

"He's no lighter than Stan Gregory—only three pounds, anyway."

"Well, Stan's quarter. Besides, he's built different. You don't understand."

"Build doesn't have anything to do with it," she asserted. "And he can run ever so fast; you know he can—"

"Neither has running anything to do with it," he retorted. "I tell you he's too light. He's all the time getting knocked out; you know that. Put him in a real game, he'd get himself killed. Then what would you do to me?"

"Oh, Tubby," she pleaded. "He could play one quarter. Let him in for one quarter, just so he can get his letter. Why, you don't know how *much* it means to him—he's worked ever since he was a freshman for a letter, and now he's a senior, and you don't *know*—"

"If I don't," interrupted Tubby callously, "it's not your fault. I can't do it, Bee. Now do forget it!"

"Why can't you?"

"Oh, good night!" he exclaimed. "Didn't I just finish telling you? Because he can't play. That's why."

Bee eyed him malevolently. Then she rose.

"*That's* friendship," she remarked, apparently for the benefit of any who might be within hearing. "*That's* what comes of two boys living next door all their lives and going to prep together and being in the same frat and always staying around together till you could hardly tell them apart—except by their *looks*," she added as an afterthought and apparently with derogatory intent toward Tubby. "One of them," she pursued, "gets to be football captain, and he won't let the other one on the team, when he *knows* how much he wants his letter, and he *knows* how he's tried ever since he was a freshman, and he—"

The philippic was interrupted at this point by the librarian's assistant, who, as their voices increased in volume, had approached rapidly. She now urged that they either go outside or continue the debate in a whisper. She had no desire to stop the conversation entirely.

"Thank you," said Bee loftily, "I'll go. I don't *care* to talk to him."

Tubby watched her haughty departure with a deep bitterness of soul. Since the first week of college it seemed to him Bee had dogged his footsteps with that urgent plea. Before each game the onslaught had been renewed, and now that the last game was near, she left him no peace. Certainly she had made him lose sleep and neglect his lessons; almost she had caused him to lose weight. This last, candid friends asserted, should do him neither harm nor inconvenience. The general status of those who are overweight is well known to the public. Tubby had earned his name by his figure.

As he reflected unhappily upon it, the cause of his despondency approached. Spencer Brown, or Spence, or familiarly and affectionately Buster Brown, was much more slender than Tubby was stout. He had delicate features and beautiful eyes and hands. The idea of his slight, graceful form on the football field was provocative of laughter. No one laughed at him, however. His soul burned with the desire to really play football, and for four seasons he had struggled through try-outs and practise games, had been wofully battered and mauled, and finally had been allowed through two games to sit on the side lines in a suit, a conventional blanket round his shoulders, and his heart in his throat at every down.

"You weren't out to practise," he said, seating himself on the corner of the table. The librarian's assistant had returned to her alcove.

"No," said Tubby, "I hadda work. Web said I better rest, anyhow. I've gotta get that Iceland paper in to-night, and I can't find a darn thing about Iceland," he added plaintively, realizing that this time himself was not at all at fault.

"What're you looking in? The encyclopedia's no good for *that*," said Spencer with superiority. "Come in the other room. There's a book in here with everything in it."

Tubby, relieved, followed him. If Spence could do with a football, he reflected, what he could with a library, he would make the All-American in no time.

"I'm going home," said Spence, having

seen Tubby safely embarked on his Icelandic pilgrimage. "Was Bee around here, d'you know?"

The cloud descended anew upon Tubby.

"I should say she was," he began with heat, then checked himself. "Yes," he said mildly, "I saw her come in a while ago, and go out again." This, he reflected later, was not strictly true. He had *not* seen her come in. He had not wished her to come in. He had done all in his power to insure against her coming in. But he *had* seen her go out.

Iceland is old in history, and Tubby had got only as far as King Olaf the Good when there came a very gentle cough beside him. He glanced up apprehensively, almost guiltily—due entirely to Bee. Small, serious-faced Marion Smith stood beside him.

"Mr. Rogers," she said formally, "I feel as though I'm intruding, of course, and that I shouldn't be speaking about this to you at all. But isn't there some way of giving Spencer Brown a chance in the game Saturday?"

Tubby's spirit groaned heavily—fortunately not aloud. His eyes fell to his book.

"I'm afraid not," he said. "Of course you can't tell what'll happen in a game; but unless all the other subs get knocked out—he's so light, you know."

It was difficult to refuse anything under the direct glance of Marion Smith's serious blue eyes. She never bothered herself with trivialities, and she somehow always managed to convey the impression that one was in the wrong and that her judgment in any matter was omniscient. There were at least two fellows on the campus whom, by mere weight of word and glance, she had cowed into such lack of spirit that they smoked their cherished sophomore pipes only behind locked doors. Her speaking on this subject was in itself noteworthy. Tubby felt uncomfortable. She stood and waited for further explanation.

"I'm sorry," he said finally. "I can't do anything; you know Web—" He let his voice die away in a sort of accusatory murmur that should have satisfactorily settled the blame on the coach.

"Mr. Webster," said Marion gently, "would be glad to let him in for a quarter,

if you could arrange it. He told me so. So please see what you can do."

Having fired her Parthian arrow—it was rather more like a Krupp broadside in its effect—she walked away, and Tubby glowered after her hopelessly. It was a low trick of Web, to throw it onto him that way. Web was notoriously soft-hearted toward the girls. And, of course, Marion— He returned to Iceland, but his subsequent knowledge of the country was regrettably desultory.

At five o'clock the librarian's assistant announced her intention of closing the library until after dinner, and Tubby, with the others who had been its occupants, perforce left. He boarded a car to go home, and, seeing Elizabeth Endicott, went with a certain feeling of pleasure to sit beside her. The masculine bosom was usually stirred with this sensation at sight of her; exactly why was never definite. She was not so beautiful as many other girls, and she did not in the least exert herself to please, having on the contrary a manner of being overpleased with herself and a confident expectation that all comers shared this feeling.

"Hullo, Bubbles," said Tubby, dropping into the seat beside her.

"Hullo, Tubby," she smiled. "Have some peanuts."

Peanuts are at times most soothing to the soul, and Bubbles's gay chatter was balm to his mind.

"How about the game?" she asked finally. "What's the line-up for Saturday?"

He recited the line-up. She had a remarkable comprehension of such matters—for a girl—and when he had finished she said thoughtfully:

"Why don't you change Dutch and Cooper for Saturday? Because you know *they'll* play Fitch at left, and you know they'll try those passes like they did in the Ridgefield game; and *you know* what that Fitch did to Cooper last year. And *Dutch* could hold him."

Tubby eyed her with admiration. "I'd thought of that myself. Web and I talked about it. But we won't do it till Saturday, anyway."

She was thoughtful over this. "That's a

good idea. And Tubby, look here, you're going to give Buster a chance in the game, aren't you?"

"Oh, Bubbles!" he exploded in such obvious anguish that she grew concerned, fearing that he had bitten unwarily into a peanut that was not all it should be.

"Oh, no, no, no!" he cried. "Not the peanuts! Oh, good night!"

"No reason for you to act so crabby, then," she returned with spirit. "I'm sure I don't see anything else. Did a pin stick you?"

"No," he answered dejectedly. "Here's our corner. I don't feel very well to-day, Bubbles. That's all."

"You shouldn't have eaten any peanuts," she decided. "I shouldn't have offered them to you. I've made you break training. Tubby, you *mustn't* get sick and let us lose the game Saturday."

"The game," he replied, "will never be lost for about six peanuts."

"Six," said Bubbles, watching him depart toward his home. "He ate the whole bagful."

She did not know that she had fallen greatly in his esteem.

On Saturday Tubby, in the fourth quarter, was on the enemy's forty-yard line. The score was 3-0. His team was playing a losing game. He knew it. This was the first time they had been so near the blue-and-white goal. The blue-and-white rooters were no less sensible of this than was their team, and their hoarse slogan, "Hold 'em! Hold 'em!" was growing a trifle perfunctory. Their team had held 'em during all the game. Further urging was almost an impertinence.

Tubby's men were not yet in the losing spirit. But the dice were clogged against them. Bee McElhaney had informed him that she had prayed for at least seven men to get their legs broken so that Buster Brown could get in the game. Her prayer seemed near fulfilment. No legs had yet been sacrificed to her, but man after man had left the bench to fill the holes in the line, and Buster Brown sat there alone.

Tubby did not let his eyes go in that direction. He hadn't time. Besides, he knew better than Bee, with all her vehem-

ence, better than the coach with his regrets, the eagerness that burned in the dark eyes, the wistfulness of the face above the faded blanket, the hot desire that filled his chum's heart. It *was* his last chance. Tubby knew. Could he have given the half of two-thirds of what was his, he would have. There were times when he would have given all. But now—his team was playing a losing game, and he silently prayed that another man might *not* be knocked, to let the last substitute in the game.

Stan Gregory's voice sent a familiar signal, and Phil Haney dove ahead for five yards. Thirty-five to make. Then—he never knew how it happened—the ball was in Tubby's hands, the goal-posts seemed almost in front of him, and a man in a blue sweater was plunging at his knees.

Into his mind flashed a picture it had long carried—the picture of a hero. Four years before Ran Fischer had leaped clean over a tackler's head and run in for a touchdown. He knew that his legs were not so long as Fischer's, but as the blue sweater dropped he leaped. He cleared the man, the goal was fair before him. Then the ground, suddenly becoming bumpy and uneven, rose and struck him fairly on the head.

A great roar sounded in his ears, then died away. Bright, hot points danced before his eyes. Something dragged wetly across his face.

He opened his eyes. The roar was growing again, the hot points had all dropped suddenly to his knee. He groaned and closed his eyes again, feeling very sick at the stomach and heavy at the head. He was conscious that he was lifted and that a lifter hurt his knee excruciatingly.

Then he struggled to a sitting posture on a table in the training-quarters, and a strange gentleman pushed him down again, while another seemed to be fastening something very weighty on his knee.

"Lemme up," muttered Tubby. "The game—the ball—lemme up."

"Just a minute—a minute," said the strange gentleman, quite evidently with the intention of soothing. It had the opposite effect. Tubby's voice rose to a veritable wail.

"The ga-ame!" he cried.

"The game is over," said the gentleman gently, and Tubby knew that the confused roar he heard was not in his head but outside, where a triumphant serpentine was going round the field—a blue-and-white serpentine. He lay very still and closed his eyes.

The game was over. Buster Brown had had to go in in his place, and any one man on the other team could knock out Buster Brown without half-trying. A tear slipped from under his closed lashes. It was his last game, and he had lost it.

Tubby came back to college on crutches and found himself a hero. How much a hero he himself did not know for a long time. The football letters were given out, and Buster Brown had earned one—he had been in the big game for three minutes. Bee McElhaney wore the initialed sweater with an air of having at last come into her rights. She it was who first surprised Tubby with her plaudits.

"You know, Tubby," she said unexpectedly, "after all the mean things you said beforehand, I'd never have expected you to go and give Buster his letter after all."

They were sitting out a dance. She played with a tiny ivory fan that was suspended by a long blue ribbon, and her brown eyes were softly shining.

"I couldn't very well help giving him his letter," began Tubby, construing her meaning as the literal act of bestowal, "after he got in the game—"

"Oh, I didn't mean that," she assured him. "I mean you letting him in the game."

He took the small fan from her fingers and snapped it open and shut.

"Me busting my knee," he suggested. "*That's* what let him in the game."

"Of course," she assented. "But that's why it was so grand of you." She eyed him with sincere admiration. "I never would have imagined you could do anything so grand."

"Busting your knee isn't so grand," he remarked.

"Oh, but Tubby," she cried, "getting yourself hurt so that Buster could get in the game was grand!"

"Getting myself hurt!" ejaculated Tubby. "As if I fell on my knee on purpose!"

"Of course!" cried Bee. "Oh, Tubby, it's no use you pretending. We all saw you do it, and we all think it was wonderful!"

Tubby looked at her, speechless. The fan slipped from his fingers and clattered on the bench between them.

"You know," said Bee softly, "what I used to say to you about friendship and how you and Buster always stuck together and everything? Well, now, you see, I *know*."

Tubby opened his mouth, but no words came. And just then came Jack Graham seeking Bee, and she went away to fox-trot with him, leaving Tubby still with no word adequate to express his feeling.

He expressed himself next day with vigor to four of his fraternity brothers, who listened with patience while he wondered who in the devil had put the idea in Bee's silly head that he would do such a fool thing as to *purposely* drop on his knee and crack it?

"Oh, of course," said Phil Haney, "nobody'd *want* to break their knee. You jumped harder than you meant to. That was all."

"I never meant to jump at all," cried Tubby. "I mean, I never meant to fall. I meant to jump over Mason's tackle."

"Mason," said Jack Graham gently, "was on the other side, you know, Tubby."

Tubby eyed them in impotent and rising wrath.

"It *would* be kind of rough," observed Johnny Barnes, "to work four years for a letter and then—"

"Why, you great big stiffs," roared Tubby ragefully. "Do you mean to say you think I'd throw away the *game* for anybody under the sun? Oh, good night! I didn't think there were such fools!"

"We couldn't have won anyway," re-

marked Holly Warrington, "in three minutes."

There was a little silence. Tubby rose and reached for his crutches.

"Guess I'll go home," he said.

The others said nothing.

He went home.

Then he went next door and sought for Spencer Brown, who came at his whistle and wished to do anything that Tubby might desire.

Tubby unburdened himself in a few brief sentences.

"Nobody'd be such a fool, Spence; you know it," he said. "Why, when a game—look here," he broke off in sudden suspicion of something in the other's face. "Why, you—you don't believe that rot, do you?"

"Of course not," cried Spence, with more ardor than was necessary. "Of course not. It *looked* that way, you know, Tubby, but of course—I know you too well—"

"Oh, you darned idiot," gasped Tubby. "I tell you I didn't! I didn't! I didn't!"

"I know you didn't!" cried Spence hastily.

Tubby eyed him in silence.

"Guess I'll go home," he said, turning and hobbling on his crutches across the lawn.

"Darned idiots," he muttered. "Darned idiots! Think I'd throw away a *game*—"

Spencer Brown, for just three weeks possessor of the thing his soul had yearned for through four years, watched the fat, hobbling figure as it vanished in the dusk, and on his face was more love and veneration than had ever been there before.

Tubby, still giving voice to intermittent ejaculations, meant to convey his opinion of the mental condition of all his friends, knew that he was seeing into the future, where, throughout a vista of hopeless years, his unwilling head was bowed to the acute discomfort of a halo.

RED HOT ADVENTURE FROM THE JUMP OFF!
THE SUBSTITUTE MILLIONAIRE
 BY HULBERT FOOTNER
 BEGINNING IN NEXT WEEK'S ALL-STORY

Lady of the Night Wind

by Varick Vanardy

Author of "Alias the Night Wind," "That Man Crewe," "Swell Draper, Gangster," etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HOUSE OF ALADDIN.

WHEN Harvard seated himself upon the rustic bench under the tree, the time was approximately half past ten, and he had been there a full hour when he roused himself to a realization of what he was doing.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed audibly, but softly. "What am I doing! Spying upon Katherine!" But instantly he denied the charge that he had made against himself.

He had not gone there to spy; he had not thought of such a thing; he had been puzzled, and he had wandered to that spot merely because the location of it had been uppermost in his mind.

"My goodness!" he murmured, smiling. "What a thing for me to do—to come here and sit down and wait, simply because—" He got to his feet and strode swiftly away, taking a course that led him to the lodge gate and out upon the highway, for he felt the necessity of the exercise that a long and rapid walk would give him. "Katherine may meet whomsoever she pleases, at any time and place that best suits her, if she wishes to, and she can inform me about it at her own good pleasure. She always has reasons for doing things, and her reasons are always good ones," he announced to himself as he passed the gate.

The saving grace which assisted Bel-

knap's plans—and Katherine's—that night was that both were a trifle ahead of time in arriving at the appointed place.

Belknap left his room soon after eleven. He had stowed some necessary articles in the black bag which he lowered to the ground from one of his windows by a cord—after the watchful Julius had transferred his espionage from the windows to the veranda.

He then descended the stairs nonchalantly to the first floor, and encountered nobody, as it happened, although he was prepared for such an event; but everybody was outside.

He went out at the side entrance, darted into the shadows, made his way cautiously to the point under his room windows, secured his bag, and went swiftly toward the lake, having determined that he would conceal himself in the woods behind the rustic bench, but at a point where he could keep an eye upon it, until Katherine should appear.

A strong point with Belknap was that he never neglected caution: therefore, without having made a sound in his approach to the place, he made the discovery that the bench was already occupied by a man.

He watched and waited, not without misgivings, a time that seemed interminable; but at last Harvard left the bench, and Belknap recognized him—and attributed the circumstances of his being there to accident.

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for October 5.

Fifteen minutes later Katherine came—fully ten minutes before midnight.

She also approached the spot through the woods, and so silently that even the watchful Belknap did not hear her; but when she crossed the open space to the elder, he saw and recognized her.

Instead of following after her, his caution being predominant, he uttered a low whistle, which brought her to a standstill, listening. When he repeated it, she went to him among the trees.

Neither of them suspected that other ears than their own had heard that warning whistle; but there was one who did—who heard it and crept toward the sound of it—who caught a recognizing glimpse of Katherine as she returned from the tree to the wood—and who very nearly forgot to watch on, because of the utterly amazing fact.

Katherine went close to Belknap.

"Do not speak," she said in a whisper. "Make no sound whatever, if you can avoid it. Follow me."

She led the way among the huge trees where the darkness was so deep that Belknap felt as if he was pursuing only a shadow that was more dense than those around it. Meanwhile, the owner of those other ears that had heard the whistled signal, came to a full stop, stood irresolute for a moment, and then deliberately turned away in the opposite direction.

Katherine led her companion to a point where she halted a moment as if to rest. In reality she did it in order to press a finger upon a certain spot in the bark of the tree against which she leaned. After a second or two she went on.

They came, presently, to a long flight of hard wood steps which she proceeded to mount. When they were nearly to the top, Belknap murmured:

"Can I venture to make a remark, Mrs. Harvard?"

"If you speak softly, yes," she answered without turning her head. "What is it?"

"I thought that I had thoroughly looked over the place, but I never saw these steps before. I didn't know they were here."

"They weren't," she replied laconically. "Come on, please."

A steep and winding path succeeded the steps. It twisted so amazingly about between boulders that it was not discernible as a path even in daylight.

Again Katherine paused, half-way along the winding path. She pressed upon two more secret places without Belknap's suspecting that she did it. The first pressure converted the stairs they had just climbed into a smooth and steep and inaccessible surface; the second one converted the same sort of inclined surface above them to steps.

Thus, presently, they arrived at the door to the Nest, which was wide open—for Katherine negotiated that secret mechanism while she climbed the last flight of steps.

She passed inside, into black darkness. Belknap followed her, wonderingly; and as he was on the point of asking a question, he heard the click of a closing door. There was no other sound or jar to it.

Then, so suddenly that it startled him, the room in which they stood was flooded with light, and Belknap discovered that he was facing Katherine across a huge, square-cornered table of solid oak, in a great room that might have been "the dream come true" of any artist, musician, writer, or pronounced sybarite.

Long accustomed as he was to manifest no surprise at anything, Belknap could not conceal his amazement.

"Aladdin's lamp!" he exclaimed. "Where do you keep it concealed, dear lady? And where is the jinnee?"

"The jinnee," she replied, smiling a little, "is here. Would you like proof of it? Look behind you."

He turned slowly.

As he did so the lights went out—all save one which glowed faintly by comparison with the recent illumination in the ceiling over their heads.

Even Belknap's stoic self could barely repress a startled exclamation and an involuntary shudder when he discovered that he had been standing within a few inches of a floorless space into the black depths of which a spiral staircase descended; and as he turned again to question Katherine, the last light was shut off.

"Oh, I say!" he exclaimed with a half laugh, and yet with a touch of petulance; but before he could add to that remark all the lights were turned on again, and he saw that Katherine stood near the center of the other half of the room beyond the table. The trap in the floor behind him had closed itself without a sound.

"Be seated, Mr. Belknap," she said to him formally. "That is not a trap in which to catch the unwary, that I showed you. It is my cellar—my storehouse, carved out of the solid rock. It is one—only one—of a thousand secrets of this place."

"Why did you show me that much?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders. "Was it to warn me, perhaps?"

"I did it as a reply to your former question—to prove to you that the jinnee of my conjuring is constantly at my hand, in this house, prepared for instant obedience."

"I understand," Belknap replied soberly. "That is at once a warning and a threat. Have no fear of me, Mrs. Harvard. While I am here I will be a 'slave of the lamp.'"

Katherine, in the coldly formal tone in which she had last spoken, instructed Belknap concerning his surroundings.

"Over against the wall behind you, there is a wide and soft couch where you may rest, and sleep," she said. "Such conveniences as you require, you will readily discover, if you seek them. Before I go I will switch off the major part of the lights, leaving the others burning, which you may turn on and off at will. Such doors as you find fastened against you, may not be opened by any skill of burglary. I mention that fact merely to spare you useless effort in case you have brought your tools of the craft with you in your bag."

"I assure you—" he began.

"Don't. It is unnecessary."

"We are inside of the Swiss chalet, on the bluff, are we not?" Belknap asked.

"Yes."

"What about this brilliant illumination—in case somebody outside should look in this direction?"

"Not a ray of light within the house can be discovered from outside," she answered.

"You will find reading matter here, if you want it," she went on. "There are cards for solitaire in the table drawer; also chess, for working out problems, if that pastime entertains you. If you can cook, there are electrical conveniences, and material for anything which I have thought you might require; only, while you remain, you will have to forego fresh meats and vegetables. You will find sufficient canned goods, however. The water which constantly flows in and out of the porcelain tank in the electric kitchenette, is from a never-failing spring, and is nearly as cold as ice-water. That, with tea, coffee, and perhaps chocolate, must suffice you as beverages.

"When occasion makes it necessary that I should come here to see you, you will hear the humming of an electric buzzer, and I will invariably announce my approach at least twenty minutes before I will appear."

She stopped a moment, and an enigmatical smile softened her expression. Then:

"I will suggest that you had best not stand too near to the door when you are expecting me to arrive. The jinnee is always there on guard."

"Will you tell me what you mean by that remark, Mrs. Harvard?" Belknap inquired, impressed by her manner.

"I mean that in case you should be too eager to receive me, when you have been signaled that I am coming, it would not be safe for you to stand too near to the door. There is another entrance to my cellar in the rock, just in front of it, which I shall probably open as I approach. You might get a nasty fall, you know, for there is no spiral staircase there."

"By Jove!" Belknap could not refrain from exclaiming in his admiration.

"You are the only person," she went on, unmoved, "save myself, who has set foot within this building since it was completed. Nobody comes here—"

"Not your husband?"

"Nobody—and none will come."

"What if I should want you to come to me—in case you should remain too long absent? Is there some method by which I can signal to you—from a window—"

"Mr. Belknap, while you remain here, you will not see daylight once. There are windows, but they may not be opened—if you would be entirely secure. You will have plenty of air, however—the ventilation system is perfect, but electricity must take the place of sunlight. But, if you should want me"—she crossed the room swiftly and lifted a small Japanese idol that stood upon one end of the granite shelf above the fireplace—"you will find a button here. By pressing it five times in succession—remember, *five* times—it will convey a silent signal to me which I will presently discover. That is all for the present, I think."

She turned abruptly and moved swiftly toward the door, which, to his profound amazement, swung open as she advanced toward it.

He darted forward to detain her—not by force, but by expostulation and argument—for there was much that he wished yet to say to her, and to hear her say; but she had passed the threshold before he could take the second step in her direction; the massive door closed itself swiftly and silently—without a sound save a delicate click of its mechanism; and Belknap could see, when he stared at the place beyond which she had disappeared, only a smooth surface, unrelieved by knob or bolt or visible hinge.

CHAPTER XXX.

BLACK JULIUS SPEAKS.

KATHERINE, making her way back to the house, touching hidden secrets here and there as she progressed—to facilitate her progress, and, metaphorically, to "shut her gates behind her"—selected the same route by which she had led Belknap to the Nest.

Naturally she passed again quite close to the rustic bench under the box-elder—and as naturally she glanced toward it in passing.

She halted.

Outlined against the opalescent surface of the lake beyond, she plainly saw two persons seated there, side by side, and quite

close together; moreover, they were so perfectly silhouetted against the faintly shining background that she recognized both, on the instant.

"Strange," she thought, and moved silently backward, away from them, before she continued on her way. "Roberta and Mr. Carruthers seated there together at this hour, and in an intimate position that suggests former acquaintance. I wonder—"

She did not complete the conjectural thought, for just ahead of her, in one of the paths that led to the house, she saw Betty Clancy hurrying away.

"That is strange, too," Katherine commented silently. Then she smiled, and added to her thought: "Why, of course! Betty walked down to the lake with them, and, little matchmaker that she is, scented a possible romance, and so sought the first excuse she could think of to leave them together."

She permitted Betty to enter the house before her; then, as she ascended the steps to the veranda, she encountered Black Julius.

"Why, Julius!" she exclaimed. "You ought to be in bed."

"Yes, Mis' Kitten, I know it. But I thought I'd wait fo' Mr. Harvard. He hasn't come in yet; and Mr. Clancy is out, too."

"Where did they go?" she asked, assuming that they were together.

"Mr. Harvard went down toward the lake about half past ten, so Mr. Archer told me. And Mr. Clancy went out 'bout half an hour ago, Mis' Kitten."

"Oh, well, you need not wait for them, Julius. They are doubtless taking a walk together. They are just 'boys again' whenever they can get by themselves;" and with a smiling good night to her faithful servitor, she entered the house and sought her own room.

Julius stared after her, slowly shaking his head. He was deeply puzzled, and profoundly troubled.

"No," the black muttered to himself. "She wouldn't take that man to the Nest. She has just sent him off about his business; but—but—but—"

Down at the lodge gate, Harvard, returning from his long and rapid walk, came upon Tom Clancy and Rushton engaged in earnest conversation.

"What the dickens—" he began; but Tom interrupted.

"Gee, Bing, I'm glad you happened along. Rushton has made a most extraordinary discovery about that guy Belknap—if only it turns out to be true. And, say, we'll have to take the old Senator into our conference in order to determine that point."

"What in blazes are you talking about, Tom?" Bing inquired impatiently.

"I'm talking about Belknap. Rushton has got a line on him. Come on into the house, Rushton. We'll go to Bing's den and talk it over."

When Harvard, accompanied by Clancy and Rushton, approached the veranda, Black Julius stepped out from a shadow among the shrubbery just in front of them, and his appearance was so unexpected that Rushton's right hand flew to the pocket where he carried a weapon; but he grinned in the darkness, and drew forth a handkerchief instead as he heard Julius say:

"Mr. Harvard, sir."

"Yes, Julius. What is it?" Harvard returned.

"May I speak with you a moment, sir?"

Clancy and Rushton moved onward, and Julius, in a low tone, made the report to his master that he had determined upon.

"I ask your pardon, sir, for doing things that are outside of my duties," he began. (Julius, remember, was an educated negro, and his language, save for an occasional slurring of the vowels, was nearly always correct.) "But I have seen certain things that have made me watchful, and—I have discovered other things which I think I ought to tell to you."

"Won't they keep till morning, Julius?" asked Harvard.

"No, sir; begging your pardon."

"Things about what? Things about whom, Julius?"

"About Mr. Belknap, sir."

"Are they matters which you believe I should know about to-night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. We are going to my lounging-room now to discuss that same person. You may come with us, Julius."

In Harvard's den, behind closed doors, he announced:

"Julius has something to tell us about Belknap. I think it will be well to hear what he has to say before we listen to your report, Rushton. It begins to look, to me, as if everybody save myself has dug up some definite criticism of Belknap. I am thoroughly opposed to discussing the character of one of my guests in this manner, but, because only my best friend, my confidential employee, and Julius, who is always trustworthy, are here, I will consent to it. Now, Julius, what have you to tell us?"

"Mr. Harvard," Julius replied soberly, "in the beginning, I just didn't like Mr. Belknap; that was the onliest thing I had against him; but, sir, I set myself to watching him. At first I didn't see anything that I could put my finger on, that was against him, only"—he turned toward the others—"you must remember that I have been Mis' Harvard's special servant ever since she was bo'n, and there ain't no expression of her face that Black Julius don't know the meanin' of. I was going to say that at first I didn't see anything, only that Mis' Kitty—excuse me; Mis' Harvard—that she certainly did seem to me to despise him, an' to be just a little wee scrimpsy bit afraid of him. That set me to watchin' closer."

"Get down to the facts, Julius," Harvard commanded.

"Yes, sir. There wasn't any facts till Mr. Belknap was called to the telephone last night. I knew it wasn't right, sir, but I fixed the switchboard so that I could hear, too, and—"

"Julius!" Harvard exclaimed, aghast.

"I know, sir, it wasn't right; but I did it just the same, and I'm glad of it—seeing what has happened since. I didn't hear all that was said. A man in Washington was talking, and he didn't say much, 'cept to tell Mr. Belknap to go to the old mill on our place the next mawnin' to meet a man who would tell him the rest. Well, sir, I went to the old mill, too, and I got there

first. They didn't talk English, so I couldn't understand what was said—'cept-in' when they used names."

"What names did you hear them use?" Rushton demanded, intensely interested in Julius's account.

"I wrote them down, sir, so I wouldn't forget them—those that were not familiar. One was Bruce Brainard; an—"

"What?" exclaimed Harvard. Then: "Go on, Julius; I understand."

"Another name was Saulsbury, and a third one was a name that I used to know, years ago, down in Kentucky. It was Belding."

It was Rushton's turn to manifest surprise.

"Belding, did you say, Julius? What was the first name that went with it?"

"It wasn't mentioned, sir; but, the first name of the Belding that I knew about, years ago, was Cranshaw. Yes, sir; Cranshaw Belding."

"Gee-whillikins! You don't say!" Rushton exclaimed. "Now, what do you know about that! How old was he when you knew him, Julius, and what became of him? How long ago was it when you knew about him?"

"It is a good many years ago, sir—when Senator Maxwilton was a judge. More than thirty years ago. Cranshaw Belding was a little under forty years old, then. He was hung for murder, and it was Judge Maxwilton who sentenced him."

Rushton, manifesting considerable repressed excitement, turned to Harvard and Clancy.

"That seems to clinch matters so far as my report is concerned," he said; "and the Senator will know more, likely enough. The Cranshaw Belding that Julius knew must have been the father of—what am I talking about? You haven't heard my report, yet. Say, Julius, is that all you can tell us?"

"No, sir; not quite."

"Well, then, give us the rest of it."

"You, see, sir, I was afraid that those two who met at the old mill were planning to rob us, so I kept an eye on Mr. Belknap all day. But I reckon I was mistaken, because he has gone away!"

"Gone away? Left Myquest? Gone, without saying a word about it to anybody? Is that what you mean to say, Julius?" Clancy demanded.

"Yes, sir—with a satchel—soon after eleven, to-night. He went through the woods at the south side of the lake—skulkinglike. I saw him myself."

"Did you follow him, Julius?"

"No, sir."

"Was he alone when you saw him? Did that other chap—the one at the mill—meet him? Did you see anybody with him?"

"Yes, sir, I saw somebody meet him, but it was very dark under the trees, and—well, sir, one couldn't see more than the outlines of a person." (Julius would have lost his right arm rather than tell anybody that the outlined figure of the person who had met Belknap in the woods was as familiar to him as his own face in a mirror).

The three white men of the group were silent for a space; then Harvard spoke.

"What Julius has told us compels me to say something that I had intended to keep to myself," he said. "You noticed my surprise when Julius mentioned the names of Brainard and Saulsbury. Bruce Brainard is here. Carruthers is Brainard. Saulsbury brought him first, yesterday, to ask me if I would receive him as a guest, under the assumed name. The man is a secret service operative. He is on the trail of a man whom he believes to be identical with Conrad Belknap. I refused to receive him, at first, but Saulsbury overrode my objections. Carruthers's scar, by the way, Tom, is not a real one, although it is as perfect as if it were. It is stained on. Saulsbury told me that he is wonderfully adept at disguising himself, and is considered one of the best operatives in Washington. I—"

"Say, Mr. Harvard," Rushton interrupted, bending forward.

"Well, Rushton?"

"I think that it's about time that you listened to my report; and, likewise, I think that you'd better wake up Mr. Brainard and bring him here before I make it. Maybe it will help him in his work, and more'n likely he can help me in mine."

"Very well, Rushton. Since we have

gone to such lengths already, no doubt you are right. No, Julius, I will go, myself."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"BRAINARD, OF THE SECRET SERVICE.

WHEN Harvard stepped into the corridor on his way to Carruthers's room he discovered that gentleman in the act of ascending the stairs toward it. He turned about when he heard Harvard's low-toned call.

"You have been outside?" Harvard asked abruptly.

"Yes."

"On the trail of your man?"

"No."

"Belknap has gone. I thought, possibly, you might know it."

"Gone? Gone, when—and where, Mr. Harvard?"

"Come with me, please," Bing said, instead of answering the questions. "We are holding an impromptu conference in my den. Mr. Clancy, and a detective in whom I have every confidence, are there; also Black Julius, who is a privileged person in this family. Julius has told us some surprising things about Belknap, and Rushton still has something more to say about him. He would also like to hear what you may be willing to tell. Will you come, please?"

"Yes, thank you. I will be glad to. Have you told them who and what I am?"

"Yes; and also that you are Brainard, instead of Carruthers."

Introductions were quickly made. At the last, Harvard added: "And this is Julius, Mr. Carruthers. (We will stick to that name, and not use Brainard, I think.) He has served in Mrs. Harvard's family all his life."

It was the first time that Julius had seen Carruthers close up. As he turned to face him, the others saw the negro give a violent start, heard him catch his breath in a short, quick gasp—saw him lift one hand and brush it across his eyes. They supposed it was the livid scar that startled him so, notwithstanding that he had been told that it was not a real one—or, possibly it was astonishment because the stranger

grasped him by the hand, as he would have done to a white man.

"I foresee that Julius and I will be friends," Carruthers said while he held the negro's gaze for a short moment. Then he turned to the others, and Julius crossed the room on a pretense of bringing up another chair, although one had already been shoved forward.

"You may be seated, Julius; there is no necessity for you to stand," Harvard remarked. "Tom, will you, as concisely as possible, tell Mr. Carruthers of what has already been said?"

Clancy did so, rapidly; and although Carruthers listened intently, he made no comment.

"Now, Rushton, we will listen to you," Clancy finished.

"Mine 'll be short, but to the point," Rushton answered—and it was noticeable that he addressed himself directly to Carruthers, as if in him he had already recognized a master mind for criminal investigation. "Mr. Clancy didn't cotton to Belknap from the first. He asked me to find out who he was—and is. I couldn't get no satisfaction from any lines that we already had on him, so I sent a kid down here with what looked like a toy-camera. He's a little guy, but older than he looks; and he's smart. I figured that nobody'd pay any attention to a kid takin' snap-shots with a toy. See?"

Nobody replied. Rushton continued:

"He got two. One of 'em was a corker. I had it enlarged, and a thousand of 'em printed. I sent one to the police of every city, big an' little, an' to almost every town I could think of, with the request, 'Please identify, if possible.' When I'd finished sendin' 'em, I had a dozen of 'em left. Then I got a hunch. Says I to myself, 'That guy went to Archer's just to get himself took to Myquest. He ain't there on no common stunt, either, and he ain't no common crook, or I'd have had a line on him before now. What's his lay?' says I. 'Card-sharpin', mebbby, or blackmail.' Blackmail sort of fitted my sconce; and, if that was his lay, it followed that he thought he knew something about the Maxwilton family, or about Mr. Harvard, that would

draw coin. Well, I sent the dozen pictures I had left to every place on the map around about the locality where Lady Kate was born, in Kentucky—sent 'em to constables, and all that. Then I had another hundred printed and sent more to other places down there; and I looked up a list of Mr. Harvard's classmates in college and sent them some—and so on.

"Well, Mr. Carruthers, I got this letter this afternoon. You read it out loud. It's the finish of what I've got to say."

Carruthers received the letter, glanced through it, and then did as requested. It was dated from a town in Kentucky that was located less than a score of miles from the homestead of Senator Maxwilton.

The letter was as follows:

DEAR SIR:

Your letter with picture received. First off I didn't think I knew any such person, but when I looked at it some more I got to reckoning that I'd seen him somewhere; and finally I remembered a man who'd been to our place two or three years ago asking for old Judge Marbury, who's dead and gone ten years. He had asked me about the judge, and I'd sent him to the judge's son, who's practising law now in his dad's place. I was certain it was the same man, so I ups and takes the picture over to young Boyd Marbury—he's only twenty-five now. Soon's I showed it to him he says: "Yes, sir; I knew him." And that's all I could get out of him for a while. But Boyd likes me, and bimeby he tells me this—seeing as how a regular detective wants the information, only he made me swear that I wouldn't tell nobody else. The man came here to ask about some property, says he, that he understood that Cranshaw Belding (who was hung for murder thirty years ago) had left behind him. Said he was distant kin to Belding. He got mad when he found that it had all been sold for taxes years ago, and done some cussing. Then he went away without paying young Boyd a cent. Well, sir, Boyd and me we put our heads together, and we (that is, I did) remembered that Cran Belding had a son that was three or four years old when he was hung, that he *said* he'd murdered at the same time he killed the mother. And then I remembered a kind of a jerky way that the stranger had had about him that was a whole lot like what I'd seen Cran Belding do lots of times. So, I says to myself, I'll bet a cooky that Cran didn't kill his boy, and that the chap that came here was that boy growed up.

That's all I know, Mr. Rushton, and it ain't much. You can take it for what it's worth, if it's worth anything at all. He don't *look* like Cran did, but he *acts* like him, and he's got a way of jerking his head that's like him—and I wouldn't

wonder a mite if it was him—that is, if the man whose picture you sent to me ain't Cran Belding's boy growed up.

Yours truly,

JASPER D. SEELOVER,

Town Constable.

Although Carruthers read the letter through almost without expression, his remarkable eyes were all aglow when he lifted them to encounter Bing Harvard's gaze. When he spoke it was in the same quiet tone that he had used before, indicative of nothing.

"Mr. Rushton has done me a great service," he said; "he has done the department that I serve a greater one. Cranshaw Belding, addressed as 'C. B.' by his intimates, is the name of the man I want, and without doubt Conrad Belknap—the initials are the same, you observe—is the man."

"I have heard him called C. B.," Bing said, "on one occasion."

"That gives us added assurance. Julius overheard the name Belding at the old mill. Belknap's information in regard to my coming here was accurate; he proved that to me to-night at the boat-house, when he claimed to have met me before, without the scar, and under the name of Brainard. His cheek and assurance are phenomenal. He is a cool and capable scoundrel. I am not at liberty at the moment to tell exactly why Uncle Sam wants him, and has wanted him for some time. But, with the information now at hand, I shall not hesitate to arrest him as soon as he can be found."

"Can you tell me why, in the devil's name, he came to Myquest?" Harvard asked.

"I can only guess as to that, Mr. Harvard, and this is too serious a matter to guess about. I will tell you all this: if he did not leave Myquest till after eleven o'clock, he did not go far. I am not alone on this case."

When the conference and exchange of opinions came to an end, Carruthers signified his intention of accompanying Rushton to his car. Harvard and Clancy at once sought their respective beds.

"I was wonderin'," Rushton said to his companion as soon as they were in the

open, "if you was figurin' on tellin' me anything more about that guy. I could see that you wasn't ready to give it all up to Bing Harvard and Tom Clancy—but me! That's different, ain't it?"

"Yes, Rushton. That is why I came outside with you. This Cranshaw Belding (I have personally known that Belknap is Belding, for a long time; and an acquaintance of mine has also known it, although neither of us were in a position to prove it) has a long criminal record, and a bad one. It began when he was a mere boy, and he is now, according to my best information, thirty-four years old. He was born with brains; he is superlatively intelligent, and he has courage. I don't think that he knows what physical fear is; nor mental fear, either, for that matter. He has good blood in him, too—the best that Kentucky boasts, on both sides of his ancestry. But he is unmoral; a man who apparently was born without morals. The combination creates a dangerous character to be at large. He is utterly unscrupulous, save in one particular, and that one to which I refer is remarkable because it is the one scruple that one would never expect in a man of his characteristics."

"Say, what is it—that thing that you're talkin' about?" Rushton asked.

"He respects, and is known to be fastidious in regard to women. It is an anomaly in his general character inherited, probably, from his mother's family. At all events, he has it, as has been proved by his acts, many times, to my personal information and belief."

Rushton grunted. It was plain that he received that statement with a large grain of salt; but the only response he made was to put another question.

"Do you mind tellin' me what he's wanted for? Why your department is after him?" he asked.

"Not at all. I have told you that his criminal record began when he was a boy. It is, in fact, nearly as old as he is. He was brought up, and trained, almost from babyhood, in the family of a man who was probably the greatest, shrewdest, keenest, and ablest criminal who ever defied the government authorities—the most expert bond-

forgery, bill-forgery, and all-around counterfeiter of bond-plates, bill-plates, and of all sorts of negotiable securities, that the world has ever known."

"Say, Brainard, you don't happen to mean old Brock—"

"Yes. He is the man I refer to. He has been dead some years, now; but—"

"Eight or ten," Rushton interpolated. "Well, what do you know about that!"

"The old man," Carruthers continued, "found in the young one, an apt pupil, a venturesome one, and a competent successor. After the death of the old man the government believed that all of the counterfeit plates with which he had carried on his business had been rounded up and accounted for; but ever since then, at intervals—and in widely separated localities—a counterfeited bond, or stock certificate, or a bill, or something of that character, has made its appearance. So, we have known, without being able to prove it, that young Belding has been carrying on the work of his teacher."

"I am giving you only a bare outline of things, Rushton, and there are two more matters connected with them which I want you to take into consideration. The first one is (I am speaking officially, now, not personally, please understand that) that the name Cranshaw Belding has always been regarded by the department as a sort of a myth. It was known that there was said to be such a person, or actually was one, but no definite description of him could be obtained. There were a dozen descriptions of him, but each one was totally different from any of the others, and not one of them could be relied upon as authentic. The other matter to which I referred just now, the second one, is this. Nearly two years ago an operative of the department sent in a report to the chief in which he stated with emphasis that he had succeeded in trailing Belding; that he knew him, and was prepared to prove identity; that he was going after his man as soon as he finished the report he was writing; that he was positive that he would 'get' him, and also many of the plates that were wanted; and that he would have proof sufficient the following day to send Belding away—

well, for keeps. That night, Rushton, two men were killed. One of them was the operative in question (whose name does not concern us just now). The other one was a youngish man whose pockets contained what appeared to be unmistakable proofs that he was Cranshaw Belding. The two had killed one another when the operative went to arrest his man.

"It so happened that I, personally, was in a position to know that the dead man was not Belding; but I could not prove it. Also, it was a long and a difficult task to convince the department that I was right. My source of information was such that I could not use it—nor could I reveal all of the facts about it that I did know, because my informant was a person whose name must not be mentioned, and whose testimony, even if the name should be revealed, would not be regarded by one of our judges as sufficient proof. The things that I did know—which I thoroughly believed that I knew—were that the real Belding had, for several years, cloaked his identity behind that of the dead man who had posed for him as Belding, and that the real Belding had deliberately supplied the operative who was killed with the information that had taken him to his death. It probably was not within his plans that his own impersonator should lose his life, too; but it is reasonably certain that he coldly planned the killing of the operative. So, you see, he is actually responsible, and therefore guilty, of both of those killings.

"That, Mr. Rushton, is all that I need to tell to you now."

"Uhuh," Rushton rejoined. Then he added: "You remarked while we were all chinning together in Harvard's room, that if Belknap didn't make his getaway before 'leven o'clock, he wouldn't get very far, because you are not alone on this case. I'd kinda like to know just what you meant by that."

"When I came to Myquest, on Belknap's trail—being convinced that he is the real Belding—I was sure in my own mind that he had reasons for being here which were not connected with his past record; and I had my own reasons for determining that he must not, and should not

escape me this time. So I asked that certain of our men, whom I named, be assigned to assist me. There are several of them in this neighborhood. You can accept it as a fact that Belknap will not be able to get past them, day or night, by train, by automobile, on foot, or by any other means. He would be seen and recognized, and would be stopped before he could go very much farther."

"Suppose he does get through, just the same?"

"He won't. He can't."

"All the same, suppose that when tomorrow comes, he's still missin', and that none of your outfit has pinched him. What will you think about that?"

"I won't think about it; I will know."

"What 'll you know?"

"I'll know that while he has been here he has arranged a temporary getaway and hiding place within the boundaries of Myquest—say at the old mill that Julius told about, or in an outbuilding, or in the ravine below the lake, or something of the sort—to which he has fled, and where he will stay in hiding as long as he pleases, or until he is rooted out. And, Mr. Rushton, believe me, no matter where that hiding place is, or how skilfully he has arranged it, he will be rooted out before long."

"Say, has it occurred to you that maybe somebody might help him to hide, eh? He might have a confederate among the help, in the house, or outside of it. Guys like him don't usually work alone."

"He will be found, Rushton, never fear," was the confident reply.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BELKNAP'S DILEMMA.

IN the mean time the object of so much interest had been undergoing—rather than enjoying, be it said—quite a variety of mental gymnastics.

Belknap, for once in his venturesome life, had had "one put over on him."

He was loath to admit the fact, even to himself, at first; but before he had passed an hour in examining his surroundings in the Nest, and in some rather forceful think-

ing, he was compelled to recognize the bald fact of it.

Katherine's manner of leaving him—the suddenness of her going—the swinging open of the door without visible act on her part as she approached it—the quick and noiseless closing of it after she passed the threshold—and the very apparent fact that he would not be able to open it in her absence, brought plainly home to his understanding the fact that he was virtually a prisoner.

He had walked deliberately, and with wide-open eyes, into a trap that she had prepared for him—a trap that had closed around him as solidly as ever a wire cage has snapped shut upon an unsuspecting rodent.

A very slight examination convinced Belknap that he could not get outside of the Swiss chalet until the chatelaine of it elected to let him out.

Whoever heard of a house that one could not get out of? Not he, certainly.

Even prisons, with their locks and bars and guards and surrounding walls, were negotiable often times by the wiser ones among the desperate men who were confined in them.

He very quickly discovered that there was no way out, unless, in the event of his applying his brains to the problem, he had the intelligence to find some of those secret buttons and appliances which supplied the open-sesame for doors and windows, and other things.

And Belknap had no notion of passively submitting to imprisonment.

"I will have it out with her the first time she comes to see me," he told himself with one of his wolfish smiles; but even as he made the remark aloud, the smile changed into a half-sheepish grin, for he remembered how perfectly self-assured she had been; how secure she had seemed from any possible attack; how totally without fear her attitude had been.

But this—the condition of his surroundings—was not at all what he had anticipated when he had demanded that she should hide him.

He had expected to be located so that he could give his orders to Katherine as he

pleased—and what he pleased—and expect her to fulfil them; instead, he was as thoroughly a helpless prisoner as if he were already a convict in solitary confinement.

She could visit him when she pleased, or not at all if she preferred.

He could not wait for her at the door and seize upon her when she entered; indeed, she had deftly warned him against undertaking that very thing—and there was not the slightest doubt left in Belknap's mind that there existed many other mechanical protectors around and about him, over his head and under his feet, to which she would have recourse if he "got fresh."

He had seen one opening in the floor into which he might have been tumbled headlong, easily, had she so willed; he had been told, and did not doubt, that there was another one at the entrance door; and he began to think that they might be anywhere, and that the beautiful owner of the Swiss chalet could, with the lifting of an eyelash, drop him through the floor at almost any spot, or herself disappear before his eyes at will.

"What a woman! By Jove, what a woman!" he exclaimed aloud, and with undoubted admiration and respect. "She has got me dead to rights—literally where I can't help myself, unless—unless I've got the brains to study out and uncover some of the secrets of this house of mysteries; and, by Jove, I think I have the wit to do that very thing. Yes, I believe I have the brains to do that. Anyhow"—and he again smiled his undoubted admiration of the woman who had bested him—"she's got me where I am utterly helpless to carry into execution any of the threats I have made. I can't tell her father or mother about Roderick, for the simple reason that I can't get to them to tell them; I can't cop any more coin at cards; but, more than all, I can't get hold of the thing that I came here after, unless I can induce her to let me loose some night long enough to get it. I wonder if she could be prevailed upon to do that? I wonder. I wonder!

"Lady Kate would be surprised if it occurred to her that my chief reason in asking her to hide me was to provide the op-

portunity, while I am supposed to be miles away, to get my fingers onto that priceless gem; and now, by jingo, she has got me fixed so that I can't do it.

"She would be still more surprised if she knew that I don't even know that precious brother of hers by sight, and that I could no more send him to prison than I could send her to one. I could let the authorities know that he is alive, and I could give a hint that would lead to his trail; but— Oh, well, there is one thing that I could do in that line, if I chose; and sometimes I have thought that I would do it: I could direct them to Roberta. She knows, confound her! She knows who Roderick Maxwilton is, where he lives, what name he uses, and how he earns his bread and salt. But I could never make her tell me, and I doubt if all the authorities in existence could force her to tell them. Roberta is—Roberta."

Katherine, it will be remembered, had left a few of the electric lights switched on so that he could make use of them; there was a reading light near one of the easy chairs, and there were others quite sufficient for his needs; but all of them combined were far from providing what one might define as illumination.

Having, in a sense, thought himself out in conjecturing, Belknap devoted nearly two hours to careful search for concealed buttons and springs, for that one beneath the little Japanese idol on the shelf had given him an idea.

He searched with great care and method, but after the two hours of utterly fruitless effort, he desisted.

"I'll sleep on it," he thought at last. "When I wake up I'll begin where I leave off now."

Katherine, when she got to her room that night, was quite content. She was smiling while she undressed and went to bed.

She knew — none better — that she had "put one over" on Belknap; and she had already decided that she would give him a continuous forty-eight hours for solitary meditation before she would visit him.

More than that, she had determined to

keep him exactly where he was until he was ready and willing to reveal to her the whole plot that he had in mind when he came to Myquest—exactly what his real reasons were for visiting Myquest at all—and until he told her all that he knew about Roderick.

She dropped asleep, still smiling.

The following morning, at midforenoon, Harvard, who had been seeking *Señorita* Cervantez, came upon her unexpectedly where she was seated with some embroidery, in the rose bower—for Harvard had one little incident up his sleeve which he had not talked about at last night's conference.

"*Señorita*," he said, "I have here something that I want to ask you to explain; a matter of eighteen written words which I believe you can explain. I saw you drop this message to Mr. Belknap from your balcony the other night. It reads: 'When every arm resists entirely, we are then concerned how effort, done before endeavor, will award rebellion's end.' It read like a poor quotation, or like utter nonsense, until it occurred to me that it might be an acrostic. When I thought of that, I read the first letter of each word, and put them together. I found: 'We are watched. Beware.' Will you, *señorita*, be good enough to explain?"

The *señorita* started to her feet when Harvard began to speak to her.

It was plain in his manner of address that he was gravely serious—and then she saw and recognized the slip of paper that he held in his hand.

Instantly she realized two things: that it had been the Night Wind who had attacked Belknap under the tree; and that he had succeeded in deciphering the message that she had dropped which he had taken from the man for whom it had been intended.

But Roberta was, nevertheless, not at all afraid.

She had prepared herself for just such an emergency, because she had more than half believed that it would happen; and if the truth be known, she was, deep down inside of her, glad that it had happened.

Before she could reply to him—if, indeed, she intended to make reply, for she

hesitated while she asked herself if she should resort to her tablet, or should admit by word of mouth that she was not without a voice—he added:

“I should say, perhaps, that I doubt your inability to use your voice. I heard you, before you dropped this message, call out to the person for whom it was intended—although you did make use of a sibilant whisper. But it was sufficiently penetrating. I heard you call two letters. I will pronounce them; and when I have done that, and while you are explaining things, I wish you also to inform me what other name the two letters stand for besides Conrad Belknap. They were ‘S-e-e B-e-e!’”

“Yes, Mr. Harvard,” she answered at once, but in a tone so low that it was almost a whisper, “I have a voice, and I can use it. I have deceived everybody. I want to explain. I had brought myself nearly to the point of doing so before you spoke just now.”

“What wild and vicious plot is being concocted here in my house under my nose?” he demanded sharply.

“Wait, please,” she answered, still in that nearly inaudible tone.

“Why wait, *señorita*?”

“Because the things that I have to tell you cannot be told in a moment. Because there is much that I should say in order to make you thoroughly understand; and I do not think that this is just the right place to say it.”

“Perhaps not,” he admitted.

“Can we not seek a place where we will be undisturbed—where we can talk without the fear of interruption?”

“Yes,” he replied, “there is the lake. Come with me. I will row you out to the middle of it. You can talk there.”

“No,” she said, and shook her shapely head. “We would be seen, and an observer would know that I was talking. I ride well, and I have not been in the saddle since I came here. Can we not ride? We would be alone in that way.”

Harvard made still another suggestion.

“If you will walk slowly to the gate at the lodge,” he said, “I will pass there soon in one of the roadsters. I will invite you to go with me. Then we can talk.”

She nodded, murmured a “Very good, Mr. Harvard,” and started away.

Ten minutes later he picked her up at the lodge gate, and they drove away side by side.

Two small incidents happened as they did so: one was that Roberta, believing that nobody was near, spoke to Harvard in her natural voice as she climbed into the seat beside him; the other one was that Katherine, who had entered the unused lodge for some reason a few moments earlier, heard the car and her husband’s voice, and went quickly toward the door to inquire where he was bound. She stepped into the open doorway just as Roberta was in the act of getting into the car, and at the very instant when she used her sweetly melodious voice in addressing Bing.

Katherine stepped swiftly back again out of sight.

Utter amazement is the only adequate manner in which to describe her sensations; not because Roberta happened to be at the lodge gate when Harvard was driving out, and that he should ask her to ride with him, but that Roberta should speak to him in a perfectly natural manner, inducing no surprise on his part that she used her voice (she who was supposed to be without voice) but precisely as if he had known from the beginning of things that she could talk.

Katherine walked very slowly on her return to the house. She had much to think about.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHAT ROBERTA HAD TO TELL.

HARVARD did not speak again for some time after Roberta was seated beside him. He drove the car in silence, guiding it, at the first opportunity, out of the main highway into less frequented thoroughfares. After a time he slowed down until they made less than ten miles an hour.

“Mr. Harvard,” Roberta began, “there is so much that I must tell to you, and so much also that I should leave unsaid for others to inform you about, that I shall ask you to hear me through to the end of

what I have to say, with as little interruption as is possible."

"I will interrupt you, *señorita*," he replied, "only when a question that I regard as important seems necessary."

"In that case," she said, "I will begin by making a statement that will amaze you, perhaps, more than anything else I will have to say."

"The entire situation is sufficiently amazing," he replied. "But what is the statement you refer to?"

"This: the man whom you know as Conrad Belknap is my husband. I have been his wife ten years. I was married to him when I was seventeen. When I was nineteen—somewhat less than two years after our marriage—I left him, and hid myself away where I hoped he would never find me. It was not until nearly five years after that when he did find me. I was in the far West—in Idaho—teaching school; and I had secured a divorce from him three years before he discovered me."

"Then you are not his wife—unless you remarried. Did you?"

"No. I used the present tense in referring to the subject for the sake of directness and to be explicit. I have never been his wife since I left him more than eight years ago, but I have been more or less closely associated with him and his evil ways ever since he discovered me in Idaho between three and four years ago. He has compelled that—has forced me to do what I have done; to seem to condone his criminalities; to associate with crooks and criminals; to sometimes go the length of actual participation in his crookedness—or of seeming to do so—he has compelled that much of complacency on my part by holding over me a threat which, until now, I have not had the courage to defy."

"One moment. Why 'until now'?"

"I will reply to that question ambiguously, and explain more fully when I get to it. Something happened Saturday night which was established to my satisfaction on Sunday, and which I became positively assured of only last night, that has made it both possible and logical for me to defy the man you know as Conrad Belknap."

"I see. You will explain that point

later, you say. But you have twice used the expression, 'the man I know as Belknap.' Am I to understand that the person's right name is not Conrad Belknap?"

"Yes. His name is—"

"Wait! Is it Cranshaw Belding?"

"What? You know?" Roberta exclaimed.

"Yes. I know," Harvard returned quietly.

"While I was in Idaho," Roberta continued slowly, after a moment's contemplation of Harvard's face, "I met, and learned to love, and was loved by another man. I had already secured my divorce, so there was no obstacle of that character to our marriage. But, there were two obstacles—serious ones, both—nevertheless. One of them was occasioned by his point of view; the other one was by my own. He was living under a cloud, in disguise, and was known by a name that was not his own; and there were many reasons beside the actual cloud to which I have referred why he should not resume his own name and seek to prove—as he believed he could do—his innocence of the act which had been charged to him. He would not ask me to be his wife until he could stand clear before the world, clothed in his right name. But, Mr. Harvard, even so, I would have prevailed upon him, and we would have fought battles side by side but for the one insurmountable objection that I had.

"It was this: I knew that if Cranshaw Belding should find me, and know that I had married another man, he would kill that other man, or have him murdered, without compunction. I knew Cranshaw Belding better than he knew himself. I knew that my marriage to another would be the death-warrant of that other. And now, Mr. Harvard, I have another surprise for you. The man whom I would have married in Idaho bore the name (not his family name, remember) of Bruce Brainard."

"Bruce Brainard? Carruthers? The se—" He stopped.

"Yes," Roberta calmly replied. "The secret service operative who is called Bruce Brainard, whom you have received in your home at the solicitation of your friend,

Morton Saulsbury, under the name of Daniel Carruthers, and whose real identity I know as well as I know yours, is the man I love, and who loves me; is the man who has been wrongly charged, in the past, with a crime with which he had nothing to do; is the man whose battles I have helped to fight, and who has helped me to fight mine; is the man of all others whom I have ever known who is the soul of honor and upright manhood."

Harvard drove on in silence. Presently:

"Have I permission to mention you to him?" Bing asked.

"Yes. I want you to do so, please."

"Did you know that he was coming to Myquest before he actually appeared?"

"He told me Saturday night that Mr. Saulsbury would bring him to call Sunday to ask you to receive him the following day, under another name, as a guest. He also told me that his chief was to arrive at Mr. Saulsbury's home Sunday night at twelve o'clock, and that he had decided to tell the entire story of his life to his chief, in the presence of Mr. Saulsbury. Last night I met him again by appointment after midnight. He told me then that his chief had merely chuckled when he heard Mr. Brainard's story, and had replied: 'Why, Brainy'—that is what he is called by his intimates in the service—I have known the truth about those matters two years; ever since six months after you became one of us, in fact. It is part of my duty to know, thoroughly, the men who work for me. The man who was guilty of the things you were accused of has been in the federal prison at Atlanta more than a year. You are like some doctors that I have heard about—entirely efficient when another is ill, but absolutely inefficient when they get sick themselves. You aren't worth your salt when it comes to doctoring yourself.' Then he added: 'I have not mentioned this to you because I preferred to let you tell me about it yourself in your own good time after you had screwed up the necessary moral courage to do it.'"

"*Señorita*—I will continue to address you so—are you willing to tell me who Bruce Brainard really is?"

"No, please. That is one of the sub-

jects that I referred to in the beginning when I told you that there are things which I must leave unsaid, for others to inform you about."

"Brainard himself, or others?"

"Brainard himself *and* others."

"Why did you pretend to be voiceless when you came to Myquest?"

"Because I had spoken with Mrs. Harvard over the telephone, and did not know until she greeted me that day that she was the person with whom I had talked."

"Wait. Was your talk with her that you refer to in the middle of the night?"

"Yes. Before I was summoned to come to you as a pianiste."

"Well, well," Harvard said, under his breath, recalling the disturbance he had felt because of his knowledge that Katherine had used the telephone one midnight and another night. "You talked with her more than once, didn't you?"

"Twice; both times after twelve at night."

"Correct. I'm glad you told me that."

"C. B. planned my coming to Myquest," she said. "I did not want to come—I had my own reasons for not wanting to do so—but he made me do it."

"He has made a catspaw of you."

"Literally that, Mr. Harvard."

"Tell me—for you must know—why Belknap elected to visit Myquest at all."

"I can't, because I do not know."

"Is that statement literally true, *señorita*?"

"It is literally true, Mr. Harvard. I thought I knew, at the beginning, but I was mistaken. I have conjectured about it since, only to find myself again mistaken. His ways are past finding out. He is an accomplished scoundrel who compels others to do his bidding. Beyond cheating at cards, he considers himself above actual outlawry; he forces others to commit his crimes for him. If he should determine to rob your bank in New York, he would, himself, be a thousand miles away when it was done. If he should attempt to blackmail you, his own hand would not be visible in the consummation of it. If he sought Mme. Savage's jewels, he might locate them, but he would take no part in secur-

ing them. If he desired the death of Bruce Brainard, the murder would be committed, but there would be nothing to connect him with the crime. I can conjecture a score of reasons why he is at Myquest, and yet not hit upon the right one."

"That reminds me," Harvard said quickly. "Did you know that he is no longer at Myquest?"

"No," she replied calmly; "but I suspected that he was making ready to disappear, because of his defiance of Mr. Brainard, at the boat-house, last evening. Doubtless you have been told about that."

"Yes; Carruthers—that is, Brainard—told me."

"I ought to warn you, Mr. Harvard, that C. B. is more dangerous when absent than when present. If he has gone, as you say, he has not gone far. Rest assured that he is making preparations for the final coup that brought him here."

"H-m! Perhaps there is something in what you say. It is in line with Brainard's assertions. Will you tell me now why you dropped that acrostic warning to him from your balcony?"

"Certainly. I did it wholly on my own account, to put an obstacle in the way of his seeking conversations with me. I neither knew that we were watched, nor cared if we were, but I did wish to startle him into leaving me alone."

"I see. Can you tell me anything about that attempted burglary the other night?"

"I can only guess as to that, but I think it will be a good guess."

"Let me hear what it is, then."

"I have told you that he has underlings who do his dirty work for him. My guess is this: that he has promised them some pickings from the plate and jewels and other valuables to be obtained in your home, and that one of their number, who is also a leader, and jealous of C. B., has worked upon their impatience of restraint, and prevailed upon them not to await his pleasure. It is unimportant. Nothing happened. What did happen could have had no connection with the actual reason for C. B.'s presence."

"Here is another point," Harvard said, after a moment of thought. "Cranshaw

Belding is the name of the man whom Brainard is actually seeking. The department he serves has been held at bay because there was no proof of connection between Belknap and Belding. Yet, for more than ten years you have known that the two were identical; and for half that time, at least, Brainard has known it. Why, then—"

"Please wait. I know what you would ask. Mr. Brainard's unsupported testimony would not be proof of the fact; my additional testimony would be regarded as biased and insufficient. C. B. would have slipped out of the law's grasp. More; Mr. Brainard has not been willing that my association with C. B. should be disclosed. He has insisted that another means could and would be found to establish the identities."

There was silence after that which endured for many minutes. Then Harvard, with a measure of restraint in his voice, said:

"I must ask you something more in regard to Belknap's possible motive, or motives, for coming to Myquest."

"Please don't, Mr. Harvard. Ask Mr. Brainard, if you will. His opinion—and it would be merely an opinion—is vastly better than mine."

"Very well, then. But I shall ask one certain thing of you, nevertheless."

"Yes?"

"It is that when we return, or as soon thereafter as possible, you will relate to Mrs. Harvard precisely what you have told to me; and that you will tell her that you have told me. Will you promise me to do that?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. I wish to discuss the subject with her, but I prefer that you should tell your story to her first."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE DEVOTION OF JULIUS.

WHEN Bing and Roberta got back, luncheon had just been announced, and the guests were already assembling for the midday meal. Belknap's ab-

sence had not been generally noticed until then.

After it there was some discussion of the subject, and Harvard—considerably to Katherine's astonishment—allayed the curiosity of all by saying, casually:

"Mr. Belknap was called away suddenly in the night. He took only a bag with him, so it is not unlikely that he will return at almost any time."

Katherine, watching her opportunity, withdrew from the group on the veranda silently and unnoticed.

She had determined that she would not visit Belknap at the Nest before the day to follow, which would have given him from twenty-four to thirty-six hours to accustom himself to the fact that he was a prisoner; but there was one subject which filled her with impatience of restraint of any sort, and she was eager to question the man. The subject was her brother Roderick.

"Why wait?" she asked herself as she stepped backward through an open window and glided swiftly away. "No matter how angry he may be at finding himself helpless, I need have no fear of him there. I will be amply protected by a hundred devices that he is ignorant of."

So she did not seek her room.

She passed through the house and left it at the rear, and she followed the longest route that she could have taken to bring her to the Nest.

Nevertheless, as she approached it at last, through the wood, and when she was nearly to the point where she manipulated the mechanism of the first stairs, she came, quite unexpectedly, upon Black Julius, who had been leaning his back against a tree, but who started forward eagerly as she drew near.

"Why, what are you doing here, Julius?" she asked him quickly.

"I was waitin' fo' you, Mis' Kitten," was the astonishing reply, given with the freedom of his class when devotion to their "home-folks" is the incentive.

"Waiting for me? Here?" his mistress demanded with a show of impatience.

"Yes, Mis' Kitten; waitin' just the same as I uster wait, when you was a little wee mite of a girl, only so high, every time that

I thought you had something' on youah mind that you'd like to tell Julius about. I knew that you'd come along past heah sooner 'r later, an'—an' you mustn't be mad at me, Mis' Kitten, please—I reckon that mebby you'd let me help."

Poor Julius was terribly disturbed. He had passed the last half of the preceding night, and all of that day thus far, in a state of mental torture. Particularly had he suffered since the revelations at the conference in Harvard's den, and at the risk of mortally offending his beloved mistress, he had made up his mind to speak.

"You must tell me, quite plainly, what you are talking about, Julius," Katherine said.

"Mis' Kitten, I suspect mebby you'll never fo'give me, but I was watchin' that Belknap white trash last night. I'd been watchin' him all day, too. I had seen enough to know that he was crooked. I suspected that he was a thief. But it don't make any difference what he was or is, I was watchin', and I knew when he left the house. Then I lost sight of him fo' a while, but I found him again, hidin' out heah behind a tree, an' waitin' fo' somebody. I suspected that the somebody was another white trash like himself, an' that mebby they was goin' to rob the house; but I saw you meet him—please, please fo'give Black Julius, Mis' Kitten—an' I saw you lead him away, goin' toward the Nest. But I couldn't believe that you would take him there, where nobody but youah own self has ever been—an' I didn't believe it till last night, when I found out that—that—Oh, Mis' Kitten, there is something else that I found out last night, too, that I jes' must tell you about as soon as I get through with this."

Katherine, with her eyes steadily upon the black, listened without motion or expression, too greatly astonished and too profoundly moved to speak before she had heard all that Julius had to tell.

"I didn't believe that you had taken that man to the Nest last night until I found out that there is a lot of men hangin' around Myquest to gobble him up if he tries to get away; and then I knew that you must have done it. And I knew that

you would be going there some time to-day to see him again; so I waited right heah."

"Why? To tell me that you had been spying upon your mistress?" Katherine asked coldly.

"Mis' Kitten, I ain't been spyin' on you; I've been spyin' on him, and I just happened to see you. And I waited because I wanted to ask you if you please, please, would let ole Black Julius help you in whatever it is that you're doin'."

There was suspicious moisture in Katherine's eyes as she took a step forward and rested one hand on Julius's arm.

She understood the depth of his devotion. She knew, without asking, that he had told nobody of what he had seen.

"Yes, Julius," she said softly, "I will let you help me. I am glad that you saw, and that you found the courage to speak. You shall help me—but not just now. Go to your cottage and wait there for me. Some time this afternoon, or evening, I will seek you, and then I will tell you what you can do. Wait, Julius!" as he started away obediently. "What was the 'something else' that you found out about last night which you 'just must tell me about'?"

"Mis' Kitten, it is something that's mighty important; but—but—will you please wait till you come to the cabin to see me, an' let me tell you then? Please?"

Katherine nodded, and smiled, and passed on. Julius stood quite still, watching after her; then murmured to himself:

"Bless her sweet heart! I wonder what she'll say when I tell her that Mister Roddie is right heah at Myquest, without her knowin' a word about it?"

When Katherine stepped upon the threshold of the door that had mechanically opened to admit her to the Nest, she saw Belknap standing beside the big oak table, with one hand resting lightly upon it, regarding her with a half-quizzical smile which, for once, was without its wonted wolfishness of expression.

Between them, close to the open door, yawned an oblong hole in the floor—as she had warned him might happen—which was silently filled while she waited, although he could not discover any act of hers that operated the mechanism of closing it.

When she passed inside, the door closed automatically behind her. As soon as that happened, Belknap spoke.

"Please wait a moment where you are, Mrs. Harvard," he said. "I want to ask you a question."

"Yes?" she replied, pausing.

"What is there to prevent me from leaping forward, now, upon you, and seizing you, if I were so disposed?"

"Tell me first why you ask the question; then—perhaps—I will reply to it," she answered him.

"I ask it because I have discovered that I am a prisoner here; that I cannot get out of this house save at your own good pleasure—unless I seize you and compel you to let me out. What is there to prevent me from doing that very thing? For if I should seize you, I could make you do it. You know that."

"Are you very curious about the answer to your first question?" she asked, and gave him an inscrutable smile.

"Yes."

"There is nothing to prevent you from attempting it, Mr. Belknap. There is something to keep you from accomplishing it. If you doubt me, try it. I am here; you are there—at a distance of about three yards. Spring, if you like; seize me, if you can. If you succeed—if you can get close enough to me to touch me with the ends of your fingers, I will promise to let you out of this house whenever you have the desire to go, day or night. Try it," she repeated, mockingly.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I have the will to try it."

"Do so; only, be warned. You will sincerely regret the act."

For a moment he regarded her steadily, and she realized that he was actually on the point of making the attempt. But he hesitated; and hesitating, surrendered.

"You win," he said, and grinned, as if it was an actual pleasure to him to be bested. "I don't know whether you are bluffing or not. If you are, you're the champion bluffer of the continent. Anyhow, I won't call you this time."

"Thank you," she replied. "Now, will you be so good as to seat yourself in the

armchair behind you? When you have done that I will pass around to the chair at the opposite side of the table."

"Huh!" he exclaimed, half jestingly. "How do I know that it isn't a trick-chair, and that it will fly through the ceiling or disappear through the floor the minute I touch it?"

"You don't know; that is the crux of all the mysteries of this house. You don't know them. I do."

"Mrs. Harvard," he said, "you're a wonder!" and he dropped upon the chair.

Katherine passed quickly to the opposite side of the table.

She pulled open a drawer in it, and closed it again. She moved some of the magazines and books that were upon it. She dropped her handkerchief to the floor and stooped to regain it, and as she straightened again she heard a sharp and angry expletive from Belknap; it was not really an oath, although very near to one.

Katherine was smiling when her eyes encountered Belknap's angry gaze.

"You are not uncomfortable, are you?" she asked. "That steel arm doesn't pinch too closely, does it? You, see, I thought it wise to teach you a lesson. One of my workmen procured me the model of that chair in the ancient city of Nuremberg. History will tell you of others, somewhat like it, although this one is an improvement."

Katherine, in one of her motions at or behind the table, had loosened the mechanism of the Nuremberg chair. A steel arm which ordinarily looked to be merely a part of its back, had been released, and had swung around to the front, a foot above Belknap's waist, and had locked itself fast, with the result that while he was entirely free to use his arms and hands and legs and feet, he could not rise from the chair, or get out of it; and he had already made the discovery that he could not.

"Will you be good if I will release you?" she asked him.

"You'd better wait a little till I recover my temper," he said with a grim smile.

"When you wish to be freed, tell me."

"You should have lived in the middle ages," he said, half crossly, half admiringly.

"No; I would not then have had the aid of electricity and hydraulics."

"Well, anyhow—"

"There is something that I want to ask you about, Mr. Belknap. Perhaps I had better keep you where you are until I do that. You may be more amenable."

"Possibly. What is it?"

"I want you to tell me everything that you know about my brother Roderick. That is why I have come to you to-day. Otherwise I should have left you entirely to yourself until to-morrow."

"H-m!" he said.

"Are you willing to tell me all that you can tell me?" she asked.

"I don't know, Mrs. Harvard. Possibly we can bargain about it."

"Bargain about it?" she asked.

"Exactly that," he rejoined.

"What is it that you would want me to do in return for such information as you can give me about my brother?"

Belknap hesitated a moment, in deep thought. Then he replied:

"To-day is Tuesday. I will want you, to-morrow night or the night following—and I will decide that point when I see you to-morrow—to come here to me, say a little before two o'clock in the morning. I will want you, then, to let me go outside. I will be prepared and ready to go as soon as you arrive. I will want you to remain here, waiting for me, until I return—which will be an hour; possibly two hours. If you will definitely agree to all of those stipulations, I will, right now, tell you all that I know about your brother."

"I wonder," she replied, musingly, "if you are in the habit of keeping your promises."

"No," he frankly admitted, "I am not. But I will keep that one."

"Would you also keep the other one—to return here within two hours?"

"I will do that, save in one event. You see, I am quite frank with you."

"You appear to be so."

"If that event occurs—and I believe it very likely that it will—I will not return; I will go elsewhere; disappear; will have ceased to annoy you by my presence at Myquest. Surely that would please you

more than to have me back here, a burden on your hands."

She nodded without replying. He went on:

"If we agree to this bargain—if I do go outside to-morrow night or the one following, and have not returned by four o'clock, you will know that I will not come, and that you are well rid of me."

Katherine shook her head negatively.

"I don't think that I can agree to that, Mr. Belknap, even at the tempting price you offer—information about my brother," she said.

"Why not?"

"There are several reasons. For one thing, I am beginning to suspect that your knowledge of him doesn't amount to much; I have begun to doubt if there is anything that you can tell me about him that is worth while. Still, I might nevertheless bargain with you, and hear what you might tell me, if it were not for another consideration."

"Tell me what that one is," he asked her. "But first, let me out of this chair."

She nodded, and passed around behind him. Although he turned his head and tried his best to observe her every act, he had not the least notion when and how she again worked the mechanism of the Nuremberg chair. But, the steel arm that held him fast was released; it flew back to its former position as if it were one of the

braces at the back of the chair, and as he got upon his feet, Katherine returned quickly to the opposite side of the table. From there she replied to his last question.

"The other consideration—and I have decided that I cannot believe any promise that you might make in the negative about it—is this: the use you would make of your two hours of liberty. You might seek my father and mother, and betray to them the fact that my brother lives—although I do not really think you would do that; you would have no good reason for doing it. You might help yourself to all of the jewels of my guest while I waited here and passively permitted it. You might—"

"One moment, if you please," he interrupted.

"Well?"

"If I will tell you exactly what brought me to Myquest at this time, exactly why I am here at all—if I tell you precisely what my errand outside will be—will you give me your word (I know that you will keep it if you make the promise) that you will not speak or write or otherwise convey any warning whatsoever of my intention?"

"I will consider it," she replied with a slow smile. "You had better act upon that much of a promise from me, for otherwise you cannot get out until I choose to let you out."

"All right," he answered instantly. "I'll tell you."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the conclusion of this story without waiting a month.



RECIPROCITY

BY CHARLES BENDIX

HE'D lost a wager with his love—
And he was badly smitten—
He sent to her a box of gloves,
And then he got the mitten.

But she, repenting, in her turn—
She missed him; wished him back—
Sent him a lovely dressing-coat,
And then she got the sack.

Winning Rosemary Burke

by Wolcott
LeClair
Beard



IN his swarthy, almost Moorish style, Don Miguel Farrello was undeniably handsome. His health was perfect. Also, he was prosperous—exceedingly prosperous. To all appearances, he was contented, as well. Even a bleak and bitter gale that howled and blustered through the streets failed to abate in the slightest degree his air of satisfaction with the world at large and his own position therein.

Don Miguel chuckled infectiously as he braced his big body against the rushing wind. He chuckled again as a mighty gust, tearing around the nearest corner, bore with it a little woman, as it might have borne a dry leaf, and flung her fairly into his arms.

"Sure, 'tis none so ill a wind after all," he laughed, "if it blows things such as this to a man."

Very courteously he helped the little, wind-driven woman to struggle free from their involuntary embrace. She stood clinging to a lamp-post then, and for the first time he caught sight of her wistful face, framed by a flutter of her shabby draperies. As Don Miguel looked at that face the laughter on his own faded to an expression of mingled wonderment and joy. He saw wonderment come into hers, and saw her lips move; and though all sound was instantly whisked away by the wind, he knew the shape, as it were, of those words as well as if they were spoken.

"Mike!" she gasped. "Mike O'Farrell!"

Already it has been hinted that Don Miguel was astonished, but it may as well be admitted at the start that it was not this name, which the little woman so evidently applied to him, that astonished him. The name was his own. It is true that he had altered it by translating the Christian name into Spanish and transferring the "O" from the head of his patronymic to its tail; but this was a mere detail, suggested both by his exotic appearance and professional expediency. Internally Miguel Farrello was Michael O'Farrell still; Irish, though "black Irish," from his marrow out. It showed now, in the look that came over that darkly pale face of his.

"Rosie!" he cried—and there was no difficulty in hearing him above the storm. "By the rod av St. Pathrick, 'tis Rosie Burke!"

Once more the little woman's lips could be seen to move, but nothing could be heard, and as the shape of these words was unfamiliar, Don Miguel could not understand them. He grasped her arm. She protested, but Don Miguel was endowed with physical strength that is rarely given to mankind, and the little woman had it not. In a doorway they found shelter from the storm. There, with a sort of tender violence, he pinned her against a wall by one thin shoulder, and stood looking into her face as though he could never see enough of it.

"Rosie," he cried, "I'd ha' given the

two ears av me for this sight av yer face. 'Tis the face that for all these years, night an' day alike, has been in me mind—in me heart—in me drames!"

"In yer dreams!" echoed the little woman scornfully. "Faith, 'tis yourself, Mike O'Farrell, that was willin' to take it out in dreamin'—good and willin'! You—hardly done swearin' by all the saints in heaven that ye'd care for me till the end of toime, but who ran away with a circus, niver to be heard of from that day to this! You—and your dreams!"

Don Miguel was not hurt by her bitter words. He did not retort, as with perfect truth he might have done, that when he left her he had done so at her own urgent request—or rather, at her command. To this command she had added, by way of emphasis, the statement that she, Rosemary Burke, cared more for the little finger of one Tim Murphy than she did for Mike O'Farrell's whole body. So Mike had left her and gone with a traveling circus, as she said. Her words had meant nothing; they were merely the expression of sudden ill-humor—of a plain, old-fashioned tantrum—but Mike had been deceived by the display of verbal fireworks. Miguel, since those days, had acquired wisdom and understanding far greater than that which Mike had possessed. There was one point, however, which he felt must be cleared up, and cleared up at once.

"Rosie," he demanded, his black eyes narrowing, "is it Tim Murphy? Did ye marry him, and does he ill—"

"Tim Murphy?" interrupted Rosie. "Me marry Tim Murphy? Faith, I'd rather marry Satan himself—hoofs, horns, and tail!"

Of her sincerity there could be no possibility of doubt; yet it left something to be desired in the mind of Don Miguel. Rosie's speech was too vehement. To him it seemed to indicate that Tim Murphy still was an active factor in her life. That though she might prefer to marry Satan, were the choice offered her, there was a chance that in some way unknown to Don Miguel she would be forced to marry Tim.

Questions, therefore, crowded to the lips of Don Miguel, but never got beyond them.

There was no chance for any. Rosie's head drooped quite suddenly, her knees gave way, and she started sliding down the wall against which she still was held. With a quickness that would have been marvelous in any one, but was doubly so in so large a man, he caught her in his arms and carried her, as he might have carried a baby, from the doorway into the street. As he lifted her, and realized the lightness of his burden, and how he could feel the slender bones of her frame through her pitifully thin clothing, he cursed, fluently and horribly—and quite unconsciously as well.

"'Tis starrvin' she is!" he muttered aloud. "No wondher she fainted!"

"I've not fainted," was the weak but convincing reply. "I was dizzy for a second, but I'm all right now. Let me down."

"I'll not," answered Don Miguel stubbornly. "Ye're not fit. Ye'll stay where ye are."

"Ah, Mike—please!" she begged. "Sure, even on a day like this, people will see, and I'm known in these parts. Think what the neighbors—"

"May the divvle fly away wit' the neighbors!" interrupted Mike—he had temporarily ceased to be Don Miguel—then, as an afterthought, added: "Will ye do as I say, Rosie—and no back talk?"

"I will," she promised desperately.

She had assumed an implied promise on his part that he would set her on her feet, but if there were such a promise he broke it shamelessly. A providential taxi happened to pass. He packed her into it, obtained from her the address of her neat, barren little flat, and together they drove there.

Having deposited her on a lounge, with strict injunctions not to stir, he once more assumed the character of Don Miguel. He invaded his favorite restaurant, shortly to emerge with two waiters and nearly enough provender to satisfy the hunger of a half-dozen harvest-hands—but the said provender was not of a sort to which most harvest-hands are accustomed. Far from it.

The waiters spread the feast in Rosie's flat, and were dismissed, to return later. Rosie was hungry; there could be no doubt of that. She ate, in spite of herself. For

a time Mike sat, watching her as the drawn look faded from her face so that it began to appear younger, instead of far older, than its eight-and-twenty years. It was not until the edge of her hunger was blunted that the proprieties once more recurred to her mind. By way of reply to her remonstrances Don Miguel pointed to a man's cap that hung on a peg. He had marked that cap as soon as he entered, and ever since its presence there had rankled in his mind.

"Ain't thot chappyrone enough?" he demanded. "Whose is ut?"

"Terry's," she answered. "Whose else would it be? But I forgot, Mike; ye didn't know. There's none of us left now but him and me. So we're here together—just us two."

"Just you two," echoed Mike O'Farrell pityingly. "That ain't enough, Rosie—not for you it ain't. Terry, that kid brother av yours—"

Rosie interrupted him with a laugh, half hysterical.

"Kid!" she repeated. "Have ye forgot entirely the years that have gone, Mike O'Farrell?" she asked sadly. "Sure, 'tis no kid that Terry is now, in his looks, anyway, or in his own estimation—as ye'd see in a second if he was only here. And I wish he was! Oh, but I do wish he was!"

"Where is he, then?" demanded Mike.

She answered evasively, and then changed the subject by asking about Mike himself. Mike sighed.

Something was wrong—very, very wrong—with Rosie's little world.

That much was plain, and Mike's impetuous Hibernian soul fairly blazed with impatience to know what that something was. Still, seeing that as yet she was not ready to bestow her confidence upon him, he bided his time, like the wise man that he had grown to be. In fact, he answered her question himself, and answered it at length. It was a clever recital, and a true one withal.

He told of his life, of constant change and excitement, of new sights and sounds. He told of strange countries and peoples and incidents. As Rosie listened, the confining walls of that little room receded be-

yond vast horizons, revealing worlds of sunlit seas, or of palms, domes, and minarets, of quaint cities or snow-clad peaks. Mike knew that this was so. He could tell by her parted lips, by the rapt look in her eyes, and the color of years gone by that began faintly to reappear in her cheeks. For the time all else was forgotten in the joy of those mental pictures, and at this Mike rejoiced, for he had worked deliberately with such an end in view. Now, quite as deliberately, he destroyed the airy fabric which he had been at such pains to erect. He desired contrast.

"Rosie," he said, "wouldn't ye like to see all this—and more? Not to hear me blandanderin', but to see it—really—you and Terry together, with niver a care, niver a fear for anything the nixt day may bring, but just ready to take what comes, knowin' it 'll be good. Wudden't ye like that? Wudden't ye now!"

The little woman straightened in her chair, and the light faded from her eyes. Mike knew that the walls had closed in again, shutting the visions outside the bare, clean room. But Mike had not entirely finished.

"Think, mavourneen! Wudden't ye like it?" he persisted. "Wit' niver a care—niver a fear? Wit' Terry by yer soide—yes, and wit' Tim Murphy at the other end av the earth? Wudden't ye like it? Think!"

Mike O'Farrell had not included himself in the thoughts thus suggested; as above stated, he had acquired wisdom. The strongest evidence of this wisdom, perhaps, lay in his guileful reference to Tim Murphy, which was a chance shot, but one which, nevertheless, rung a bull's-eye. Rosie's elbows were on the table now, and her face was hidden in her thin, work-scarred hands, from between the fingers of which a tear presently trickled, while her shoulders heaved with noiseless sobs.

"Would I like it!" she gasped forth after a little. "Would I like it! Faith, heaven itself, I'm thinkin', could offer no better. If Terry and me was alone, that is, not bothered by any one," she added as an afterthought.

Now, notwithstanding that he had so carefully refrained from mention of himself,

Don Michael-Miguel had not the slightest intention of holding forth this dream as one to be realized without himself as a component part thereof. Rosie was perfectly aware of this, and Mike knew that she was. The latter words of her speech, therefore—the afterthought—were plainly directed straight at him. But because they were an afterthought, Don Miguel was not in the least cast down—quite the contrary. His wisdom still held its sway. Rosie now was crying as though her heart would break.

For a time Mike sat motionless and in silence; then, reaching over, he took one of her hands in his. He was rewarded by feeling her fingers close upon his, though they did not leave her face. In another way as well his silent sympathy met with its reward, for after a little, in fragmentary sentences uttered between her sobs, she told her dismal yet melodramatic little tale. Told it in part, that is. The rest Mike was able to gather for himself.

Tim Murphy was the villain of the piece, as Mike supposed—and perhaps desired, for Mike was very human—that he would be. Tim was big, good-looking in a coarse way, and with a bluff and masterful manner that concealed his overpowering self-conceit. He dazzled many girls, but Rosie had recognized his fascinations only in order to use them as a weapon against Mike when she quarreled with him, or wished to torment him as women will torment the men they love. But Mike, taking her seriously, had vanished; and never, from that day to the present one, had Rosie ceased to resent his stupidity.

Mike was gone, however, and Tim was on the spot. Tim's attention persisted, and were repulsed the more fiercely because Rosie, womanlike, shouldered upon him the responsibility for Mike's defection. The spur of wounded vanity thus was added to Tim's desire for conquest and whatever measure of tepid affection that he might originally have felt.

So Tim became sullen—sullenly persistent. He swore, and made no secret of his vow, that he would win her or break her, or both; preferably both. For the time, however, he was powerless; powerless

even though Rosie's father died, leaving her alone in the world with Terry, her brother, who was but a child; for Rosie was well able, and also most willing when occasion arose, to offer battle on her own behalf.

But years went on, as years have a habit of doing. In his chosen way, which was politics of the less savory variety, Tim Murphy had prospered. He was leader of his district, and his saloon was headquarters for the district gang—their sanctuary, wherein the police dare not come. And the course of those years also brought Tim his opportunity, for from a child Terry grew to young manhood, and it was through Terry that Tim made his latest move against poor Rosie's defenses.

"Sure, it's not Terry's fault, Mike," said Rosie. "Indeed and indeed it's not! Listen. Tim Murphy is behind the scenes in pollytics. He takes Terry with him behind those same scenes. Not only does he let him see the wheels go round, but makes Terry a sort of leftenant, so he can help make the wheels go round. He gives Terry power—from behind. Could any boy resist that? Could you have resisted it when you was Terry's age, Mike? Say!" "No," Mike admitted thoughtfully. "No, Rosie. I misdoubt if I could. But what happened then, mavourneen? Tell me."

It was some time before she could tell him, on account of the sobs that came faster and harder even than before. But after a time she went on.

"We'd been happy, Terry and me," she said. "What with me doin' piece work for the corset factory, and him holdin' down a good job with a commission-house on Little West Twelfth Street, we was gettin' on fine, and savin' money. But he—Terry—began hangin' around that saloon of Tim Murphy's. Not that he drinks. He doesn't—they can't get him to. He had to be there, he says, on account of the political work he had to do. There's a card game in the back room, and—and—"

Once more she had to stop. Don Miguel took up the sentence where she left it off.

"Terry got to playin' to whoile away the

time," said he. "At firrst he won, then lost, and the limit was raised so's to let him 'win back his losin's.' He lost more. Most likely he lost some that he'd been collectin' for that commission-house on Little West Twelfth Street. If so, ye made good out av yer savin's, and it tuk thim all and mortgaged yer earnin's besides, so ye haven't enough food for to keep yer big sowl tied fast to yer poor little body. Therefore ye can do no more—yet Terry's still a thryin' for to win back those losses. So the next toime he defaults, it 'll be him for jail—or you for Tim Murphy—take yer choice. Which is precisely what Tim Murphy has been workin' for all along. That's why ye're frettin' yer heart out, as well as starvin'. And there ye are!"

Rosemary gradually straightened in her chair as she listened. Before the speech was finished her hands had fallen away from her face, and her eyes, filled with tears now forgotten, stared with angry surprise at Don Miguel.

"And you'd have had me believe that ye didn't even know where I was to be found!" she exclaimed bitterly; then demanded: "Where'd ye hear all that—all what ye've just been sayin'?"

"Was I right?" asked Don Miguel, ignoring the question.

She nodded, shivering. Then, for the first time, Don Miguel realized that the room was chilly. It was not heated by steam. What little heat there was came from an old-fashioned Franklin stove, in which burned a fire carefully dampered to pitiful inadequacy. Rising, Don Miguel poured on coal recklessly and began to open the drafts.

"Who told ye—all what you was tellin' me?" again demanded Rosemary. "I want to know."

"Nobody told me," he answered simply. "Knowin' how such things go, I guessed—and guessed roight. That's all. Where's Terry now?"

"Tim's," she owned reluctantly.

"Playin'?"

She nodded.

"On Sunday? And at"—he looked at his watch—"eleven o'clock in the forenoon?"

"Aye," she admitted still more reluctantly. "He's been gone since nine."

"Was that where ye was goin' when I met ye—to thry and get Terry to come home?"

Again she nodded. With a muttered exclamation too low for her to hear understandingly, he began fiercely to rake the fire, apparently as a sort of vent for his emotions. After a little he spoke, raising his voice in order that she might comprehend in spite of the noise he made.

"Rosie," he said, "listhen. Ye said, a while back, that ye'd do what ye was told to do; and now I'm going for to hold ye to yer word. I'll go and see Tim Murphy meself, and—"

With a bound Rosemary had left her chair, and was standing beside him. Her eyes were blazing, her muscles tensed with determination.

"You!" she cried. "You go and see Tim Murphy! Faith, it's a thousand dollars—no less—that he'd give for to have ye do that very thing, Mike O'Farrell, as he's told me a thousand toimes. You go there—the dirrty joint what he himself owns! But he owns more than that. He owns the disthricht, police and all. More, he can lick anny man in that disthricht, he says—anny two men, his friends say. What chance would you have with an outfit like that? Say!"

Don Miguel did not answer in words. He still held the poker. Now, grasping it with both hands, he bent the stout iron bar double, and then, without apparent effort, straightened it again.

It was a wonderful feat of sheer strength. One would naturally have expected fingers that were capable of such an act to be massive and square-ended, but the fingers of Don Miguel were not in the least like that. They were long and tapering and shapely; they were the fingers of an artist. Rosemary, in the old days, had been accustomed to ridicule them, asserting that they were like those of a woman, which also was true. Even then those fingers were incongruously strong—but not as they were now. Indeed not! There was a sort of vicarious pride in Rosie's shuddering breath of admiration.

"Are ye the strong man in that circus, Mike?" she asked.

"I was," replied Don Miguel, laying down the poker. "I am yet—among other things. But not wit' the cirrcus; sure I left that a long toime back. I have me own show now. I might say, pretty near, that I *am* me own show."

"You!" she exclaimed. "What sort of show, then?"

Was it real interest in his career that made her ask such a question at such a time, or did she seek to divert him by such talk from his expressed determination to seek Tim Murphy in the Murphy lair? Don Miguel could not decide. Her questions might have been prompted by either motive, or, for that matter, by both. In any case, however, he regarded them as favorable omens. He smiled. Also he answered the questions, not in words, but by ocular demonstration.

He snatched a fragile coffee-cup from the table and dashed it against the wall with enough apparent force to flatten a bullet, but the crash and tinkle of broken china which seemed inevitable never reached Rosemary's expectant ears. Instead the cup rebounded unbroken, ringing softly, to alight upon the back of Don Miguel's hand. Then he tossed the cup into the air and sent a plate spinning after it, followed by a fork, an apple, and a heavy carafe. For a time these objects, so different in weight and balance, whirled up and down and across, weaving intricate patterns, as though each were endowed with a separate and trained intelligence. Then, quite gently, the plate alighted upon the table, the carafe landed upon it without a jar, while the fork, handle downward, inserted itself into the mouth of the carafe, with the apple impaled upon its tines.

Then, after favoring the astounded Rosemary with the burlesque of a theatrical bow, he slipped into his overcoat, grasped his hat, and opened the door. On the threshold a thought seemed to strike him. He stopped and looked back.

"Rosie," he commanded, "you stay here. Wait till I come. And while ye're waitin', pack what clothes and little things that you and Terry needs. Have it all

ready whin I come back, for it's like there'll be no time then. Undherstand?"

He had passed out of the room and closed the door before she could reply. She watched him from the window as he walked briskly down the street and turn the corner. Then she sat down and started to think things over, for there had been no opportunity until then for uninterrupted thought.

She was angry with Mike O'Farrell—of course. Upon that she decided instantly. She had been angry with him for years, ever since he had taken her at her word and left her. The fault, it is true, had all been hers. That was one reason why she was angry. And then, what right had he to order her about—to command her to do this or that?

None—clearly none! He must be taught better. And yet, somehow, in the back of her mind, she liked being told exactly what to do, and given no choice in the matter—liked it vastly, in spite of herself. To have some one to lean upon, some one to order the life which she had found so hard to steer through its troubled waters, brought with it a sense of inexpressible relief.

Almost automatically she dragged forth a trunk and in it placed her meager personal belongings, and also Terry's. It held them all quite easily. As she ended her task once more she rebelled. She would *not* be ordered about like that! But the trunk was closed and locked, and she made no move to reopen it. Instead she sat down upon it and tried, with growing apprehension, to visualize Don Miguel's journey to the Murphy stronghold, and to imagine what was happening there.

At least twice Rosemary would have been much surprised had she been able, with her mind's eye, to follow the course of Don Miguel. To begin with, instead of repairing direct to the lair of Tim Murphy, he walked to a neighboring hotel, and there chartered a taxicab in which to continue his journey. So extraordinary a predilection for this method of locomotion could hardly fail to astonish her; yet it is safe to assume that her astonishment, to say nothing of her dismay, would have been much greater could she have beheld the lone oc-

cupant of that taxi as he emerged therefrom.

Never in the old days had Mike O'Farrell been given to excess in the use of strong drink, and surely as Don Miguel he could not greatly have changed in this regard, for had he so changed the feats with which he delighted nightly audiences would long before have become impossible to him. Yet the aspect of Don Miguel Farello, as he alighted from the taxi and ordered it to wait, was such as to cause a near-by policeman to wink, with a grin, at the taxi's chauffeur.

"He was all right when he hailed me," was the chauffeur's reply to this wink and grin. "He must have had it with him in a flask. Or more likely," he amended thoughtfully, "in two flasks—pints, both of 'em."

If Don Miguel heard this remark, he made no sign of having done so. Walking with a slight unsteadiness to the Murphy side door, he pushed it open and entered the dingy back room, hung with framed advertisements, typical of the third-rate saloon. The bar, thus formally closed, was making the usual pretense of complying with the law.

Trade was slack at that time of day, and for the moment Don Miguel was alone save for a negligible party of minor political henchmen who conversed among themselves in mysterious undertones, hardly glancing up at the entrance of this semi-inebriated stranger.

Don Miguel pressed a button, and at the summons there appeared a bartender of truculent appearance, whose head was decorated with a "cauliflower" ear. Don Miguel ordered whisky, which was brought him. Diving into a pocket, he produced a roll of yellow-backed bills of a thickness that caused the bartender's eyes to glisten acquisitively. Peeling a twenty-dollar bill from the outside, Don Miguel offered it in payment.

The change of a ten-dollar bill was returned to him. Apparently noticing nothing amiss, Don Miguel crushed the short change carelessly into his pocket and lifted the glass, then paused, the glass held halfway, and listened. His eyes, with that ap-

pearance of owlish gravity which is characteristic of a certain phase of drunkenness, wandered from the closed door of another back room to the bartender's face. Then Don Miguel spoke.

"Do my eyes deceive my—my earsight?" he inquired thickly.

"Do they *what*?" asked the bartender in return. "I don't get you."

"I mean—" explained Don Miguel; then nodded toward the closed door, whence the click of chips on a wooden table-top could be heard plainly enough. He went through the motions of dealing cards, then looked at the barkeeper interrogatively.

"Well," said that functionary in reply to the pantomimic question. "There might be a little game at that. Want to sit in?"

Don Miguel nodded. This was easy. The roll of bills, together with the apparent condition of the owner thereof, had accomplished his object far more readily than he had dared to hope. The men at the other table, their attention attracted by this conversation, looked knowingly at each other and turned their faces away in order to conceal their smiles.

The bartender vanished through the doorway into the other room. This auspicious moment was embraced by Don Miguel in order to pour his whisky into a convenient cuspidor, and then, with a resounding whack, to set his glass back upon the table before which he was seated. There was a low-toned buzz of talk in the other room. Then the bartender returned, and, holding open the door, motioned that Don Miguel should enter. Still walking unsteadily, he did so.

"This is the gennelman I mentioned," said the bartender by way of introduction, and closed the door between them.

For a moment, swaying slightly, Don Miguel stood, his eyes taking in every detail of the room in which he found himself. It was a large room, with many chairs, but only one card-littered table, around which three players were seated. One was Terry Burke; Don Miguel could have recognized him anywhere, if only by his resemblance to Rosemary.

Another, an obvious gambler of the less efficient type, and as obvious a henchman

of Tim Murphy's, was passed with a glance. The third was Tim Murphy himself.

Murphy had aged since last Don Miguel had seen him. Murphy had lain on much flesh, and it was not entirely a good quality of flesh. It was largely owing to a soft life after an active one. A soft life, Don Miguel decided, with a good deal of hard liquor.

He also had a cauliflower ear, acquired since their early days. He was powerful still, but his wind would be poor. He was more brutal than before, and his look more furtive and indirect. Frowningly, and evidently puzzled, he gazed at Don Miguel.

"Ain't I seen you somewhere before?" he asked.

"Likely," answered the person addressed. "If ye ever go to the circus, you did. Ringmaster."

"What circus? And yer name? I didn't ketch that."

"Shaughnessy," replied Don Miguel in answer to the latter question. The first one he ignored, but took from his pocket the roll of bills that had so excited the bartender's interest, and this act served every purpose.

With a wave of his hand, Murphy introduced the other two players, the unknown by the name of Mr. Shea; then counted out celluloid chips for Don Miguel. They cut for deal; it fell to Mr. Shea. The game was on.

It was, of course, the great American game—our national indoor sport—poker. In honor of the stranger's advent they started it with a jackpot. Terry, at the dealer's left, opened the pot. Don Miguel, with a pair of queens, stayed. The other two threw in their hands. Terry, nervously fingering his cards, refused to draw. Don Miguel discarded, held up three fingers, and began clumsily to try and light a cigar. Mr. Shea flipped the indicated number of cards from the pack to the table before Don Miguel.

Now Don Miguel did not appear to be watching the fingers of Mr. Shea as the latter dealt those cards. He—Don Miguel—seemed to be wholly occupied in biting off the end of his cigar, an operation that

he had overlooked when trying to light it. But he was watching, nevertheless; and he was, moreover, eminently qualified to watch, as a man who was practically the "whole show"—who was perhaps the only man living whose accomplishments ranged from feats of gigantic strength, through jugglery, to sleight-of-hand—must be qualified to watch a performance of this sort. Don Miguel saw that those cards were dealt from the bottom of the deck. According to his somewhat severely high standard, the work was not at all well done.

Clearly, according to the common practise in such cases, Tim Murphy and the amiable Mr. Shea intended to allow Don Miguel, their prospective victim, to win this first hand—to win it from poor Terry. It would save time, as they looked at the matter, and would be all the same at last—all the money would come to them. In no way, therefore, was Don Miguel surprised to find, when he picked up his cards, that two of those cards were queens. There are not many hands that will beat four queens. He did not wish to win from Terry; yet suspicions must not be aroused. Therefore he flung the fifth card face downward upon the table, held up the remaining four, and gave a half-suppressed but wholly inebriated whoop of exultation as he gazed at them. Even Terry, with a ace-high flush, could not disregard such a warning. He let the pot go, saving much money thereby.

It was Don Miguel who dealt the next hands. This time Mr. Shea lost, and lost rather heavily, while Terry won. Terry won rather frequently after that; but always, or nearly always, when Don Miguel had dealt. He—Don Miguel—lost constantly. He did not lose very much, however.

Except for Terry, who did not care, his opponents were utterly disgusted with a player who showed so lamentable a lack of gameness, and were becoming moment by moment more disgusted still. The most tempting hands that could be dealt him failed to tempt Don Miguel to anything like spirited betting. After a single raise, or two of them at most, he would assume

that air of owlish wisdom, throw down his cards, and sacrifice the pot. Who'd have thought, anyway, that so moderate a departure from strict ebriety could have such lamentable results?

Small wonder, then, that the saturnine Mr. Shea became more saturnine still, and that Tim Murphy grew more surly even than he had been before. Tim's increase of ill-temper had, however, an additional cause quite independent of Don Miguel's shortcomings. It is always exasperating when a game of cards is interrupted, and this one was interrupted constantly. Necessarily interrupted, for one cannot be the political boss in a district of that sort without being also a—more or less—benevolent despot, distributing favors and largesse, many of which had not the slightest relation to politics.

Candidates for such favors, or those who desired to be candidates, came with a frequency that increased as the afternoon wore itself away and early evening shadows began to close in. Some of these candidates were of such importance that Tim did not dare offend them, and his conversation with them, though short, was tempered. On those of less importance he vented more freely the ill-nature thus pent up within his bulky chest.

A little later still Don Miguel began to come in for a share of Tim's displeasure. At first it took the form of comments, more or less veiled, upon his—Don Miguel's—style of playing poker, or his refusal to imbibe his share of the liquor which Tim, from time to time, would order in. Then these comments became more thinly veiled and more offensively personal. Though inwardly Don Miguel was fuming, he had concealed his rising anger under an assumed mussionation. Now he resolved, however, to bear it no longer. Terry had won back all he had lost—and then some. And there was Rosemary to be considered. She would be frantically anxious by this time—about Terry, at least.

A new hand had been dealt by Mr. Shea as Don Miguel came to this decision. Hardly glancing at the cards, he threw them down and yawned noisily.

"I shink—" he began thickly.

Tim Murphy interrupted him.

"Ye think!" he said with a guffaw. "The blazes ye do! What with?"

"I shink," Don Miguel repeated imperturbably, "that I'll quit. And if this young gennelman, Misser Burke, will also quit, we'll jus' go out and get a lil' bite of dinner togesher."

"And I t'ink," snarled Tim Murphy, "that ye'll do nawthin' of the sort—see? Here you come buttin' into this game, and—well? What 'n 'ell do *you* want?"

As he spoke, Tim Murphy leaned across the table, his under jaw truculently pugnacious. His latter words, however, were not spoken to Don Miguel, but to a cripple, a man so young that he was hardly more than a boy—younger even than Terry Burke—who came blunderingly in, his twisted form more twisted even than usual from the weight of a basket which he lugged with both hands.

"Well," demanded Tim Murphy for the second time, "what 'n 'ell do *you* want?"

That first demand had daunted the little cripple. The second, however, had lent him a courage that was akin to desperation.

"I brought 'em—the whole four dozen," he said.

"Oh—you did!" snarled Tim. "Then you can just chase 'em out again—and chase yourself with 'em. And do it quick! Hear?"

"Aw, Tim!" remonstrated Terry Burke deprecatingly. "Aw, Tim! Don't!"

"Clear out!" barked Tim, unheeding. "Beat it! D' you get me?"

"But it's only two dollars—I gotta have that—and they're worth a quarter apiece anywheres, only I ain't got time to peddle 'em," doggedly persisted the cripple. "You know Katy—my kid sister. It's for medicine for her. They're all here, and they're all right—see? So, Tim, you *gotta* take em! Like you promised you would."

Then it was that Tim's rage fairly burst its bounds. With profane obscenity he expressed abysmal indifference to any promise that he might have made; and once more, with lurid threats, he ordered the cripple to depart.

From under half-shut eyelids that gave

him a delusive appearance of somnolence, Don Miguel glanced around the table. He saw in Terry's face, that was so like Rosie's, a losing fight between loyalty to his political chief and disgust at that chief's conduct. He saw Mr. Shea leaning back in his chair, a cynical smile on his mean face as he listened with mild interest to the tirade. He saw the little cripple, pale, but standing his ground with pitiful bravery. Lastly his eyes rested on Tim Murphy, from whose purple face there poured forth a gushing stream of foulness.

Don Miguel wondered what the discussion was about. Stooping, he uncovered the cripple's basket, which had been set on the floor close at hand. No wonder that the basket was heavy; the wonder was that the frail, malformed little man could lift it at all. It was filled to the brim with ice-picks—massive ones, with long, stout blades and thick handles, stoutly bound with iron.

Don Miguel took one, balanced it in his hand, and held it up before him, his owlish solemnity unabated. Then he gazed once more at the empurpled visage of Tim Murphy. That visage, as Tim, half risen from his chair, leaned across the table, was but a very short distance from Don Miguel's own. Quite gently, yet with a catlike quickness, Don Miguel placed his disengaged hand against that face and pushed. Tim flew backward as though a mule had kicked him. The hind legs of his chair thumped on the floor, the front ones raised, the chair fell over backward, so that the august feet of the local magnate were for a moment all that could be seen of him as they twinkled helplessly in the air. With the same hand Don Miguel fished from his pocket that plethoric roll of bills, stripped off one, and tossed it to the cripple.

"Take that—and beat it," he said.

The cripple, obeying, vanished. Shoving back his chair, Mr. Shea rose and got behind it, as though for shelter. He was a rat of a man, Don Miguel decided, and, like a rat, would fight if cornered. But Terry, now—Terry was different.

Terry was confused and undecided. Tim Murphy—well, Mike O'Farrell knew him also. For the moment, startled and per-

haps partially stunned, Tim was silent. But that wouldn't last. It didn't. His former vocal efforts were as nothing to that which almost instantly followed. Tim had been a prize-fighter once, and with a prize-fighter's agility he sprang to his feet, and with the same motion caught up the chair upon which he had been sitting and sent it whirling at Don Miguel's head.

Don Miguel ducked, and the chair missed him, to smash against the wall with a resounding crash. Tim's left fist followed the chair, also to miss its mark. With a gleam of polished metal, a pistol appeared in Tim's right hand, and a shot rang out, but the bullet drilled its way harmlessly into the paneled ceiling. For with a heave, which seemed too mighty by far, and too effortless to have been wrought by human hands, the table had risen from the floor. It knocked Tim's wrist upward, and with all the trained strength of Don Miguel behind it, it flung itself against Tim's chest, throwing him, before it came to the ground, against the paneled partition behind him.

Don Miguel stooped. The bartender came running in, and paused for a half second in order to take in what was happening. It was hours before he learned. Don Miguel straightened. In his right hand there was a single ice-pick; in his left as many as it could grasp. More quickly than the eye could follow, Don Miguel's hand flicked forward and back, once and then again.

It sent two of the ice-picks streaking through the air, their blades trailing behind them like the tails of small but efficient comets. The iron-bound handle of one struck the bartender between the eyes; that of the other, arriving immediately afterward, came into violent contact with the point of Mr. Shea's jaw. Both men dropped limply and lay quite still.

Hardly two seconds had passed, and it took Tim Murphy that time to recover from the second shock. Now his pistol flashed upward. This was a mistake. Again there were two of those marvelously quick movements of Don Miguel's hand, and again two of the ice-picks went streaking through the air, but this time the points flew foremost, one to pass through Tim's

cauliflower ear, the other to pierce his hand, then to bury themselves, with successive little thuds, deep in the wooden partition.

More ice-picks followed. They formed a continuous stream of shimmering steel, and their thuds, as they landed solidly in that wooden partition, were almost as rapid and regular as those of an air-hammer. By every projecting fold of his clothing, no matter how slight, they pinned Tim Murphy to the wall of his own saloon.

"Sure," remarked Don Miguel, never pausing in his work, "'tis a good knife-thrower I am, but these ice-picks is things I ain't used to. So, maybe, Tim Murphy, they nip you a little here and there. But don't ye care," he added consolingly. "'Twill only be in the thin places, near the edges, and that don't count. Sure, 'tis harrdly worth mentioning at all!"

Tim Murphy thought differently.

"Help!" he bawled.

"Mike!" screamed a voice.

It was Rosemary's. Before Don Miguel could speak the door flew open, and Rosemary herself rushed into the room. For a moment she stood while her eyes, wide with horror, took in every detail—the bartender and Mr. Shea, who, though only knocked senseless, lay apparently dead; Tim Murphy, his pistol on the floor by his feet, pinned like a modern and very unattractive St. Sebastian, with ice-picks instead of arrows, against the wall, and Mike and Terry, white and tense of face, but safe.

Then her weakness, and the nervous strain caused by hours of agonized waiting, asserted themselves. Once more her knees gave way under her. Once more Don Miguel caught and carried her, as he might have carried a baby. She had just time to encircle his neck with her arms before she fainted, on this occasion entirely and without reserve. Still dazed by the proceedings—as well he might be—Terry came forward. Don Miguel spoke crisply.

"She'd come to hunt for us—wore out by the waitin'," he explained. "You know me, Terry—'tis Mike O'Farrell I am. Go open the door av that taxi, quick!"

Terry did as he was told. Pausing long enough to make sure of the fact that the

other room was empty, and to spring the lock on the outer door, thus securing it, Don Miguel bundled Rosemary and her brother into the waiting car. A word and a yellow-backed bill, to the driver, and they moved swiftly away, to draw up before the door of Rosie's home.

"Gee!" said Terry, speaking for the first time since he left the saloon. "We'll never dare stop here! Not after what happened."

"'Tis not long that we'll be stoppin'," Don Miguel assured him. "Go up to the flat and fetch down that thrunk what ye'll find there—and jump to it, lad!"

Again Terry obeyed, and again the taxi moved away. "Where are ye goin'?" he asked.

"Hoboken," answered Don Miguel softly. "In Jersey, d'ye see, ye can get married quick and with little throuble. There's no toime to waste. The steamer leaves at noine o'clock."

"Steamer!" repeated Terry wonderingly. "What steamer?"

"I misremember her name," was the answer, "but, faith, it's no matther what she's called. For she'll take us to South Ameriky—you and Rosie and me. It's down the wan soide av that counthry that we're goin' and up the other, accordin' to the tour long since arranged. But whin the tour was laid out fer me," he added musingly, "I was to go alone. Now I'll have me wife—the wife what I carried away, with her good-will or without it, like men used for to win their wives in days long gone by. 'Tis said, sure, that in thim days women loiked to be won in that fashion; but now—"

Leaving the sentence unfinished, he sighed, smitten with misgivings. Then Rosie opened her eyes, and weakly, yet with unmistakable emphasis, spoke.

"Of course they liked it. And do yet. And always will like it, as well ye'd have known, Mike O'Farrell, if ye had sense."

Rosie closed her eyes.

Don Miguel chuckled sheepishly, his misgivings gone. Terry grinned sympathetically as the taxi, a triumphal car, laden with happiness, rolled on toward the ferry and summer seas that glistened far beyond.

Mind Prints



By Laura M. Williams

IRA TREAN was in town.

If he had returned some twenty years before, all hustling New York would have paused in its hurry to note the fact. Then there were many sweet ladies who would have hastened to their mirrors, and dozens of fellows flocked to his club.

But twenty years! He came back alone, shabby and unnoticed. The dozens of fellows were no longer about, and the many ladies were grandmothers and had ceased to think of him.

He went to a quiet hotel. Ira Trean in a small, modest hotel! He who had ridden a white donkey up Fifth Avenue, pawned his sacred grandfather's watch, dug in the ditches to develop his muscles, and been filibustering in the southern lands! He had returned quietly, and one looking into his eyes knew his passage was almost done.

Ira Trean had come home to die.

Dillman Oakes was the first to meet him. Not that he remembered him—he was too young for that. Trean spoke to him at the club, and he knew then he had heard the name in his boyhood days, and much that was jolly connected with it, too. He wanted to treat the old fellow to a drink. The Lord knew he looked as if he needed it; he was shaky and ill-preserved.

But Trean wasn't drinking. He got Dillman off in a corner and made a proposition to him that caused Dillman to slip from his chair to the floor in merriment. Trean had asked him to be blindfolded and carry a letter to an unknown address, asking no questions.

Dilly Oakes knew he was drunk, for he was perpetually so, and he smiled in a knowing way. Old Trean couldn't fool him. Poor old Trean, he had had his fling. Now he was back with a mournful face, starting the reform act.

He winked. "Nothing doing," said he. "Want to lock me up, eh? Put me in a taxi and I wake up to find myself in a cure. Nothing doing! Youth must have its fling. Come on, have a drink. You've had your fun. I'm going to have mine, don't forget it. No one expects me to reform. I don't want to reform. Let's have a drink, old man."

"I'm not trying to reform you," said Trean seriously. "I'm asking a simple favor of you."

"For my good, eh? I know all about those simple favors. Nothing doing."

"But you wouldn't refuse so harmless a—"

"I'm on," said Dillman.

When he was partially sober, Dillman Oakes told his parents about it. How Trean had rushed away from him, how shabby and queer he was, and they agreed to ignore his return altogether. But the news of it spread.

Trean's old friend, Walter Whitney, hunted him up out of curiosity. He was startled at the change in Trean. There was no recklessness about him now. He was just a tired old man, and yet he seemed pleased to see Whitney. Before long Trean made him the most senseless proposition. He asked him to take a taxi, be blindfold-

ed, and carry a note to an unknown address, asking no questions.

He had always known Trean to be unusual, but he had thought him normal. Why he should have chosen him for this task came to him suddenly, and he felt the implied insult. If *his* reputation wasn't of the best, it was no worse than Trean's had been.

Trean was watching him out of his sunken eyes, and he laughed. "Now look here, old boy, none of that with me. If you're in the toils of some fair dame, don't bring me into it."

Trean smiled. "I wouldn't get you into anything. Never hurt any one but myself. You know that."

"Yes, of course; but how'd I know where I'd find myself?"

"Can't you believe in my motives?"

"Oh, you're all right, Ira. How you feeling?"

"You think there's a woman in this?" said Trean musingly. "That's strange. Young Dillman thought I meant to restrain him."

"Oh, Dillman," scoffed Whitney; "all he thinks of is booze—drunk all the time."

"And you think of a woman? That's funnier at your age. It's only a simple favor, Walter."

"I'm too old for adventure," said Whitney. "Ask some one younger. I don't mind confessing to you, Trean, that of late years I am deadly afraid of women. They are so clever. I've got just enough to live on comfortably for the rest of my days."

"Then you won't do me this little favor?"

"Don't put it like that."

"You haven't a bit of faith in my intentions?"

"Well, not that exactly. Say—say I'm afraid."

"That *is* funny," said old man Trean. "I shall have a good laugh after you're gone. Adventure at my age—look at me!"

Whitney hastened his adieus and went to see Francis Webber about it.

"I dare say he won't ask me," said Webber pompously. "I am too practical a man. Do you think he has anything?"

"If he has," answered Whitney, "some

woman is bleeding him dry. He's in another scrape."

"Maybe he'll need a lawyer. I'll run round and see him."

Webber hadn't been in Trean's rooms five minutes before the same request was made of him. He looked into Trean's eyes some time before speaking. "Are you still at it? The adventure melodramatic. What's the game this time?"

"What do you think it is?"

Francis Webber scowled. "It can be but one thing—money."

Ira Trean started.

"I've hit it!" said Webber.

"That's very queer," answered Trean, smiling. "Dillman Oakes thought I wanted to take his drink from him. Whitney says some woman has a hold on me." He laughed. "And you say money troubles. What do you think I'd do?"

"Put me in that taxi and lock me up at the end of the journey until I signed notes or something. I'm too wise to be caught by any of your schemes, Trean."

Trean collapsed in his chair. "You don't really believe I'd do anything like *that*?"

"Yes, I do," said Webber emphatically. "You know I've got money."

"Well, well," said Trean, shaking his head. "I knew my reputation was bad, but this! I never robbed. There's good in all of us, Webber. Can't you have faith in me, in human nature?"

"Human nature is money-grabbing nature, that's what it is. I've hustled for money all my life. I know!"

"And it's been worth while?"

"Well, it's life, Trean."

"I suppose so. Yes, for some of you. It hasn't been my idea."

"So I see. If it had been you wouldn't be sitting here thinking up impossible schemes. I'm not hard-hearted, old man. Can I loan you a ten or so?"

"Thank you," said Trean, rising, "but a ten or so wouldn't be of the slightest use to me now."

"I'm sorry," said Webber, and made his escape.

There was but one other man to whom Ira Trean made his strange request. Harry

Dena was about the club a great deal, and it seemed that Trean sought him out and listened to his few remarks with respect as if thinking to himself, "Here, at last, is the man for my mission."

But Harry refused him.

"You're a writer, I hear," persisted Trean. "Here's adventure for you, perhaps."

"Thanks," Harry answered in a cool tone, "I dislike adventures."

"But what do you think I want of you, eh? Dillman Oakes—I asked him because I once knew his parents—thought I was restraining him. Whitney," he chuckled, "thought there was a woman at the end of it, and Francis Webber feared I was going to rob him. What do *you* think?"

"You'll have to excuse me, I have an engagement."

"Just a moment, please." The quiver in his voice stopped young Harry's exit.

"I knew your people, too, and I'd like to help you."

Harry Dena politely turned his gaze from the shabby figure beside him that he might hide his smile.

"What do you think?" Trean said. "It is quite important that I should know."

"I think you are trying to start something again," said Harry, losing all patience. "That's what I think. Every one has forgotten Ira Trean, and he doesn't enjoy being old and out of it. There's nothing at the end of the ride, or if there is, it's some sort of a joke."

"I see," said Trean, "a joke. You don't believe in me, either. I'm sorry. What shall I do?"

Harry laughed. "Send a small boy," said he, drawing on his gloves, "if you really want some one. They are always credulous."

Ira Trean didn't like small boys. He knew but one, the janitor's son, and he sent for him. Edie wasn't much to look at. He had lost his front teeth, never washed behind his ears, and grinned when spoken to. Nevertheless, Ira Trean stated his request to him seriously.

"Sure," said Edie. "Do I ride in a real taxi?"

"You do," replied Trean. "What do

you think I mean by sending you off like this?"

"That's what I'm fer," said Edie. "That's what little fellers does."

"Oh, is it?" asked Trean. "You're not afraid I'll lock you up or hurt you or anything like that?"

"Quit yer fooling," said Edie with a grin. "You're a kind guy. I trusts yer."

"Do you?" gasped Trean. "Do you, indeed? You win the letter!"

After he had seen Edie into the taxi, he returned to the telephone and talked over the wire for some time.

Six months later Ira Trean, the eccentric, was dead. His club might never have heard of it but for the letters received by four of its members.

"If I know anything about Ira Trean," said Harry Dena, "it's another joke, but we'll humor the old boy for the last time."

The only four men whom Ira Trean had cared about enough to approach with his singular request went together into the presence of his lawyer and sat in puzzled silence before him and a grinning boy.

"Gentlemen," began the lawyer gravely, "the late Ira Trean was, as you know, a man of peculiar ideas. He has left about six millions, in trust, of course, under the circumstances, but I'll not go into that."

"He had led a wild and erratic life," went on the lawyer calmly, "and during that life he said he had never found any one to do him a favor unless knowing exactly why he was doing it, and being well paid besides. He craved waith in his good intentions that no man had. It was his theory that man colors with his own weaknesses another's simple motives. He was constantly experimenting in these Mind Prints, as he termed them, of his associates."

"Gentlemen, each one of you he tested. He has asked that the letter you refused to carry for him, each knowing your own reason best, be passed before you to-day. This boy was his messenger. Here is the letter."

They read it together once, and it fluttered to the floor, where it lay face upward.

"I make the bearer my sole heir," was its simple statement.

Heart to Heart Talks



By the Editor



In Memoriam

ALLEN REDFIELD INGALLS

FOR FIVE YEARS ASSOCIATE EDITOR THE ALL-STORY WEEKLY

DIED OF PNEUMONIA

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 8, 1918

QUEER things happen in New York. In spite of its apparent commonplaceness, it is a great deal more than a conglomerate pile of brick and steel and stone and human beings of every shade and nationality under the sun. Beneath the rush and turmoil of business lurks always the subtler elements of romance, adventure, and tragedy. O. Henry was surely right when he christened it "Bagdad on the Hudson," for certainly had the calif of sacred memory turned his genius for investigation loose here, he would have uncovered far more amazing situations than he did in the old metropolis of the Far East. If you are at all doubtful of this, our new six-part serial, which begins next week, will undoubtedly convince you. It is called—

THE SUBSTITUTE MILLIONAIRE

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

Author of "Chase of the Linda Belle," "The Fugitive Sleuth," "The Huntress," etc.

and the initial situation is about as interesting as it can be. Suppose, for instance, you were an orphan, a young man in the early twenties with a twelve-dollar-a-week job as bookkeeper in a little sash and blind factory on a dingy street down-town, and a "home" in an equally dingy, cheap boarding-house up-town—and no prospect of a change of circumstances for many a year, if ever. And then suppose you suddenly were informed that a rich old miser, of whom you knew nothing beyond what the newspapers had to tell of his murder by an anarchist, had made you sole heir to his eighty million dollars—what would you do? Well, that is just what happened to young Jack Norman, and what he did—the complications that arose—constitute about as absorbing a story as we have published for some time. But those of you who have read Mr. Footner's other stories won't need that assurance.

PLAYWRIGHTS and novelists are the unegenic parents of many popular misconceptions and many a current conceit. Their stage heroes and the villains of the best sellers betray

the popular imagination and cement its prejudices. No one recalls his progenitor, but every one knows the country yokel who descends upon the city in the full panoply of his ignorance, only to be

crushed beneath the relentless wheels of the city juggernaut. Now, lads from up-state may betray a garish taste in ties and a profound unfamiliarity with the best social forms, but they have not proved the easy mark they have been so universally painted. We think a truer portrait of our country cousin, half yokel and half Socrates, is found in

AMAZING AMOS

BY ARMITAGE HARCOURT

the ALL-STORY WEEKLY novelette for next week. Amos is a Vermont lad, who, after the death of his father, sold his home and "other things too numerous to mention" to descend upon "unprotected New York." New York was not the final habitation of his choice, but only a junction to the land of the lad's desire, the East of Alexander the Great. Amos came, and saw, and conquered; but before he rested on the burning plane between the Euphrates and the Tigris, he put "a crackin' good idea" to work. The nature of this idea, and how it made a million, are the life-secrets of Amos's amazing career from the day he gathered potato-bugs in Vermont to the moment he crossed the classic soil of the site of battle of Arbela to— But no tabloid form can do Amos justice. Get his life's history in the issue of next week.

THE vagaries of that much-abused commodity, "the artistic temperament," are one thing the vast majority of us have come to make the allowances that are asked by art for its votaries. We have learned with an unruffled soul to accept women with short hair and men with long locks; Doris in a smock and no stockings and Ian in a velvet coat carrying his muse in a paper bag. These eccentricities of genius no longer excite the scorn or the pity of the groundlings. Art is long, and we have traveled a long way out of our American wilderness into the shade and the shelter of the Village. But when it comes to the essentials of character, we stand with our fathers, and art and its votaries must stand or fall by these pragmatic sanctions. Louis Tracy, in an incisive bit of work, "BLOW HOT, BLOW COLD," which we intend to give you in next week's magazine, lets his story point its own moral—he is as impersonal as a gas-bill. But we think you will feel about this ripping story as we do, and a cry of "Kamerad" in art or in France has the same treachery behind it.

A MAN'S decisions reveal his soul-stuff as nothing else can. Doubt and desire both play so powerful a part in the matter that perhaps, after all, the number of one's independent decisions are not many. In crucial instances Providence or Fate mercifully intervenes to take the decision out of our hands, and we have only to accept the

grim but inevitable will of the gods. Certainly, simple, stolid folk like Matthew Hartwell, "salt of the earth," know neither doubt, desire, nor wavering, when it is a question of duty; but even they reach tragic heights and depths, as you may see if you read "THE ONLY WAY," by George Allan England in next week's ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Hartwell was faced with a tremendous decision, a decision upon which hung the life of his wife, the good name of his son, and his own integrity. Caught in the coils like Laocoon, the man underwent an infinite martyrdom, and then Fate found the only way. Here is England at his best, as we think you must concur, when you have read the story.

GEORGE GILBERT's new story, "TWO ACES, TWO QUEENS AND A KING," sounds like calling a hand in poker, but this breezy little bit of Florida fun has nothing to do with cards, except that two girls both try to play the trump card which will draw the king. In this instance it took a silver king to catch a king of expert engineers, and for a time it looked as if Mildred Brendon had hooked a bigger fish than her feminine hand could land; but trust a woman to hook her fish and capture her "meat." Get next week's ALL-STORY WEEKLY, and you can learn the rules of the fascinating game—How to Land Your Man.

READERS of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY who value a splendid bit of writing as well as a striking story will keep a weather eye out for Helen E. Haskell's story, "COMPENSATION," which will be one of the golden bits in next week's magazine. Here is a story that came, not out of the rainbow of a romantic imagination, but out of the cruel crucible of life, and made into a work of art by the selective instincts of a real writer. The rise and fall of Elsie Hanna may never point our national epic, but Mrs. Hanna is big enough to fill any frame, and when her reward— But that's the story.

LAUGHED TILL SIDES ACHED

TO THE EDITOR:

I am a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY and *The Argosy*, though not a subscriber to either. The ALL-STORY WEEKLY is my favorite of all fiction magazines, and *The Argosy* is a close second. I will tell you a few of my favorite authors: J. U. Giesy and J. B. Smith, John Charles Beecham, Frank Blighon, Max Brand, Edgar Franklin, Achmed Abdullah, and last but not least, E. K. Means, bless him! I have laughed till my sides ached at Mr. Means's stories. They are a cure for the blues.

I couldn't begin to tell all of my favorite authors. I just love all the *Semi-Dual* stories. *Semi-Dual* is such a wonderful character. I like the *Swami*

Ram stories, too. Can't we have some more of them? Also the *Creve* stories. And yes, there's another favorite author of mine, Varick Vanardy.

But I came to visit you to-day, Mr. Editor, to talk about the wonderful story, "Koyala the Beautiful." I can't begin to tell you how much I like it, and all of the stories that have *Koyala* and *Peter Gross* in them. Mr. Editor, you get a sequel to "Koyala the Beautiful" if you have to turn "bad man" and stand over Mr. Beecham till he writes it. But I am sure Mr. Beecham is too kind-hearted to resist the humble pleas of the readers of this magazine for more of this delightful series. Now, isn't there a sequel in the "locker," Mr. Editor? Do tell. But can't *Peter Gross* and *Koyala* marry? Please tell Mr. Beecham to arrange it some way, so that they can "live happily ever after." My heart goes out in sympathy for poor unfortunate *Koyala*. I wish Mr. Beecham would write to the Heart to Heart Talks and tell us if he ever knew any one like her. Can't you persuade him to do so? Also if he ever knew a man like *Peter Gross*. He is my ideal of what a man should be.

Whenever is that sequel to "The Moon Pool" coming? I am getting impatient. I like all the "different" stories. I don't like stories of the present war. We get enough of it in the newspapers. Please let us have some more *Tarzan* stories; also more Mars stories. I like all those wild flights of imagination. "Draft of Eternity" was fine; also "Palos of the Dog Star Pack." Well, I must stop, or this will be too long. I want to see this in the Heart to Heart Talks; at least, the part about "Koyala the Beautiful." You may print my name. I have the courage of my convictions, you see. AN ALL-STORY WEEKLY booster from Texas,

MISS VERA JANETTE BISHOP.

Jasper, Texas.

ALL-STORY WEEKLY A JEWEL

TO THE EDITOR:

I have intended many times before to write you and congratulate you on the splendid magazine you are putting out. It is a jewel. I have been reading it off and on since I was ten years old; but I have never been able to read it steady until now. I am sixteen—working—and so buying whatever I desire to read. I buy the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. The editor and his staff deserve a great deal of credit for the success of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. The reason I give for liking it is this: There is every type of fiction in it, from the melodramatic to the best of contemporaneous novels. You are universal. You do not cater to one type of story. You have every type of story. The mind that is not centered in one rut—the mind that is open to all sorts of impressions—is the mind that selects your magazine for fiction food. As to your authors—Burroughs is in the front rank; and for God's sake produce a story

of his soon. Williams is a comer. "Suspense" was not as good—its characters not as fascinating—as in "Between Heaven and Earth." I did not care for "The Strange Case of Cavendish" at all—only lurid Western tale. The "Chase of the Linda Belle" was a fine type of summer fiction. "The Three Elks" was good, but I liked Sheehan's other tales better. "Diane of Star Hollow" was one of your best; its style was superb. More by David Potter, please. "Draft of Eternity" was good in conception; but Rousseau has not the pen for adequate description. He tried to describe something which dwarfed his pen—the end of civilization. Kummer is good. "Janie Frete, Intruder," was interesting. "Sword-Flame" was a corker, in plot and style; "A Threefold Cord" was not as good. "One Bright Idea" was too long-drawn out; it palled upon me. "The Mahogany Hoodoo" was very good. "Allatambour" a tale worthy of Stevenson. "Palos of the Dog Star Pack" a wonder. "The Labyrinth" was well conceived. "Gate of St. Anthony" was very good. "Koyala the Beautiful" was better even than "The Argus Pheasant"; Beecham has a wonderful style. "The Texan" promises well. "Everyman's Land" is fine. "Clavering the Incredible" was one of your best stories. Can't you secure another one by the same author? It was the only story that my mother ever read and liked in your magazine. Means is a dandy. And now, pardon for this criticism. It has been boiling within for a long while.

EDWARD T. ANDERSON.

FROM PANAMA TO CHINA

TO THE EDITOR:

Enclosed I am handing you my check to cover six months' subscription to both *The Argosy* and ALL-STORY WEEKLY. I have been a reader of both these publications so long it is hard to recall the time I began reading them—something around fifteen or sixteen years, purchasing them regularly from newsdealers. I read them in Panama, when I had to pay twenty-five cents a copy for them, also in China, when they cost thirty to thirty-five cents per copy. And have always been able to get them until I located here, where they have no newsdealer. I used to be a constant reader of the *Railroad Man's Magazine* and the old *Cavalier*, but have dropped the *Railroad Man's Magazine* for the two above, as I do not have as much time to devote to reading as in years past. I note in the Log-Book and Heart to Heart Talks where a great many of your readers are very critical in regard to different authors and stories. I find, being a public man, that you simply cannot please all the people all the time; hence when I find an uninteresting story, or one that I regard so, I simply pass it up, for possibly some one else would be more than pleased with that grade of fiction. Due to my being a globe-trotter myself, it is

natural I like stories of adventure. Some day I may give you a story of the battle of Vera Cruz. I was there, and saw some interesting sights that a number of your readers were not so fortunate in seeing. Kindly start these subscriptions with September 14 issues, as they are the first I have missed, and notify me in time before these run out, as I don't want to miss a copy if I can avoid it. Thanking you in advance for this favor, I am,

Yours very truly,

J. W. HUTCHINGS.

Box 82,
Taft, Texas.

LITTLE HEART-BEATS

Please find enclosed check, four dollars, for which send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for one year, beginning with the last number in July, our Saturday, July 27.

It is rather hard to get them regularly in this territory, and I don't want to miss one, as I consider it the best story magazine in the world.

Yours very respectfully,

VERNE A. STEWART.

Cascade, Idaho.

We live in a small country town where there is nothing to go to for amusement, but we get a great deal of pleasure sitting at home and reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY and *The Argosy*. My husband has been a faithful buyer of both magazines for twelve years now. Isn't that going some? I can't remember that he missed a single copy. You have some very nice writers of stories. We enjoy both the short and the continued stories. We always pass our magazines along for our friends to read. Long live the ALL-STORY WEEKLY and *The Argosy*.

MRS. ALBERTA R. BLAISDELL.

Peterboro, New Hampshire.

Enclosed find twenty-five cents in silver, for which please send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for April 21 and 28, 1917. I got some old copies from a friend; started J. U. Giesy and Junius B. Smith's story, "The Killer," and I am anxious to finish it. I started buying the ALL-STORY WEEKLY about six weeks ago, and think it the best magazine there is. I liked "The Murder Ship," by Ben Ames Williams, especially well, and hope to get more of his stories soon; also more by Edgar Rice Burroughs. They are fine. Hoping to receive my copies soon, I remain,

MISS GLADYS SHULTZ.

Boynton, Florida.

Find enclosed ten cents for the issue of August 3. I would like to start "The Threefold Cord" at the beginning. I am a constant reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, and cannot afford to miss any issue. I think that the ALL-STORY WEEKLY authors are up to the fine standard of the other

Munsey magazines, and it compares favorably with other higher-priced magazines. Hoping to receive the issue for August 3, I am,

W. L. MORGAN.

Box 221,

Dallas, Pennsylvania.

Enclosed you will find ten cents, for which please send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for May 4, 1918. I was just looking over the numbers of the magazine, and I see that I have skipped that one. There is a good story in that one, too, "One Who Was Afraid," by William MacLeod Raine, that I am reading. The way I do I wait until I get all of the continued stories, then read them all at once, instead of reading them every week. Hoping that you have this number, I remain,

Yours very truly,

EDWARD H. MUSTER.

Broad Oak, Dedham, Massachusetts.

Enclosed find fifteen cents, for which send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for August 31, which I was unable to obtain, the dealer having run out of issues of that date. I am a great reader, and always purchase reading matter that contains stories to my taste. I have tried almost every weekly and monthly magazine in circulation, but have passed them all by for the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. The editors understand the public as well as the author from whom their stories come, and conclude, as in my opinion, that the public does not want stories of the same type continually, all of which I have discovered in the six months I have been a reader of your magazine. To give you a list of my favorite stories and their authors would be an effort of which I am not capable, as I like them all. As long as the serials and short stories continue as at present, I will be a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Hoping to receive the issue of August 31, I am,

BERNARD SCHEETZ.

Francesville, Indiana.

Enclosed please find twelve cents, for which kindly send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for September 7. The news-stands had all sold out, and I just can't do without it. I think it's the best fiction magazine out. Love the Western stories best, but "Everyman's Land," "Koyala the Beautiful," "The Moon Pool," "The Lone Seminole" are splendid. Best wishes.

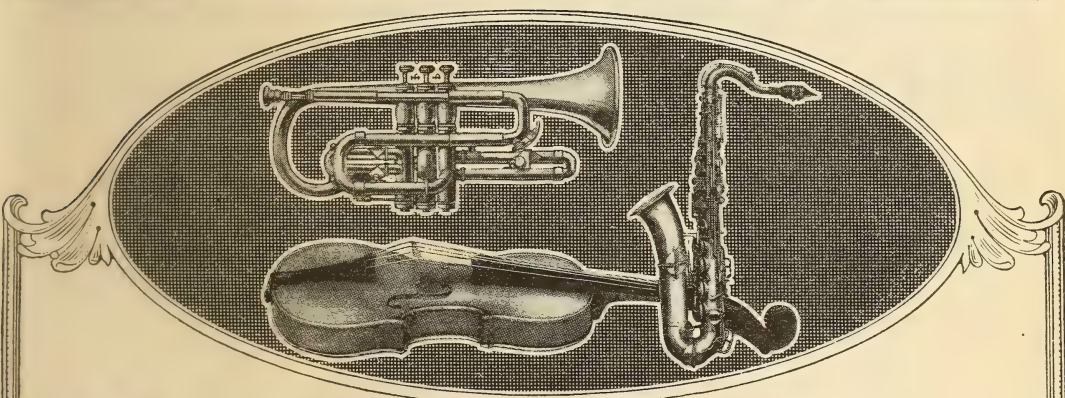
MRS. VICTORIA WIESE.

512 Van Buren Street,
Jacksonville, Florida.

I have been a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for almost a year, and I want to let you know how much I appreciate it. I am very much interested in "Everyman's Land" and "Koyala the Beautiful." In fact, I have enjoyed all the stories. The *Valentine West* stories are great.

JOYCE CLARK.

Mitchell, South Dakota.



Your Choice—Sent on Free Trial

YOU may have your choice of over 2000 musical instruments for one week's trial in your own home. Then, if you decide to buy, you may pay the rock-bottom price at the rate of a few cents a day. If you do not want the instrument, send it back. The trial does not cost you a penny.

200 Years of
Instrument Making

WURLITZER

*Write Today for Our
176-Page Catalog*

The name "Wurlitzer" stamped on musical instruments has stood for the highest quality for nearly two centuries. We are manufacturers or importers of every known musical instrument, every one sold to you at direct-from-the-manufacturers price. We've supplied U.S. Gov't with trumpets for 55 years.

Send the Coupon

Just put your name and address on the coupon now and get our big, new catalog absolutely free. Please state what in-
we'll send you the big 176-page book free and prepaid.

The Rudolph Wurlitzer Co.—Dept. 1078—East Fourth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.
South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

The Rudolph Wurlitzer Co.
Dept. 1078
4th St. Cincinnati, Ohio

E. 4th St., Cincinnati, Ohio
S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: — Please send me your 176-page catalog, absolutely free. Also tell about your special offer direct from the manufacturer.

Name

Address.....

I am interested in.....
(Name of Instrument here)

DIAMONDS AND OTHER JEWELRY ON CREDIT



No. 100. 14K Solid Gold Watch
Bracelet, Silver Laid, \$25.00

No. 101. Filigree Ring, 1
fine diamond, \$150.00

No. 102. Tooth
Ring, 1 fine
diamond, \$25.00

No. 103. Twin
Ring, 2 fine
diamonds, \$35.00

No. 104. Belcher
Ring, 1 fine
diamond, \$50.00

No. 105. Ladies'
Ring, 1 fine
diamond, \$50.00

No. 106. 14K White
Gold, 1 fine
diamond, \$65.00

No. 107. 7 Diamond
Cluster.
Ring, \$60.00

No. 108. Ladies'
Belcher, 1 fine
diamond, \$15.00

No. 109. Solid
Gold, 1 fine
diamond, 14
pearls, \$18.00

No. 110. Ladies'
Ring, 1 fine
diamond, \$20.00

No. 111. Hoop
Ring, 2 fine diamonds
and Ruby, \$45.00

No. 112. Ladies'
Ring, 1 fine
diamond, \$35.00

DE LUXE XMAS GIFTS

Send No Money—Examine Free

Let us send you a genuine Diamond on approval. You don't have to buy unless you are absolutely satisfied in every way.

Highest quality Blue-white, Perfect Cut Diamonds, set in 14K gold mountings, sent by express, prepaid, subject to your examination and approval—no red tape—no security. We Trust You.

Buy Today—10 Months to Pay

If, upon examination, the article you order is found satisfactory, pay only one-fifth of the purchase price and the balance in ten equal monthly installments. Each and every Diamond we sell is accompanied by our binding guarantee.

7½% Increase in Value Guaranteed

Diamond values are constantly advancing. We Guarantee you a steady advance in value on any Diamond bought from us by our unparalleled 7½% Profit Sharing Offer. Write for further particulars.

Catalog No. 98S of Jewelry Bargains FREE

Send for your FREE copy of our 88-page Diamond and Jewelry Catalog No. 98S. A splendid assortment of high grade Diamond Watches, Jewelry, Rings, Pins, La Vallieres, and other articles that make most acceptable Xmas gifts. Also Cameras and Phonographs.

10% discount allowed on all cash transactions

L. W. SWEET & CO., INC.

Dept. 98S, 2 and 4 Maiden Lane, New York City

Stenographers Typewriters

HELP WIN THE WAR

You are urged, as a patriotic duty, to enter the Government service in Washington, D. C., for important war work as stenographers and typewriters.

Women, especially, may thus aid in the nation's great effort. Men also are needed.

Those who have not the required training are encouraged to undergo instruction at once.

Tests are given in 550 cities every Tuesday.

The Government maintains a list of available rooms in private houses in Washington, and is erecting residence halls to accommodate thousands.

Full information and application blanks may be obtained from the Secretary of the Local Board of Civil Service Examiners at the post office or customhouse in any important city.

JOHN A. McILHENNY

President U. S. Civil Service Commission
Washington, D. C.

Special Free Trial Offer—Act Promptly

Learn Paragon Shorthand in 7 Days

Send No Money—Just The Coupon

To prove to you absolutely that you can not only master PARAGON in 7 days, but in **one evening's study of the first lesson** learn enough to write a **thousand** or more different words in Shorthand, we will mail you the complete Course on **7 days' free trial**. If, after making this test, you are not thoroughly satisfied and do not wish to keep it, simply mail

it back to us and you will owe nothing and be under no obligation whatever.

Think of it—a Shorthand so simple, so easy, so practical that, in *one evening's study* of the *first lesson*, you will be able to write *more* than a thousand words! In seven days you can complete the Course of seven Lessons and *read your notes perfectly!* To absolutely convince you of this almost unbelievable truth, we will send you the *Complete Course of 7 Lessons on 7 Days' Free Trial*.

You never heard of such a thing before, of course, and may therefore be inclined to be more or less skeptical of our claims. More than likely you will say that it is out of all reason to expect anyone to learn Shorthand in less than 7 MONTHS, to say nothing of 7 DAYS. Many of the most brilliant and successful PARAGON Shorthand writers had just such doubts in the beginning. And just as we urged them, we now urge you to lay aside your doubts long enough to *make the test at our expense*.

Ever So Simple—and the Price Only \$5 If You Decide to Keep It

PARAGON is the short cut to shorthand proficiency. It is unlike any other system in the world—a thousand times easier and simpler, and absolutely practical for all purposes. You learn in the quiet of your own home at a total cost of only \$5—and make much faster progress than if you paid \$50 or \$75 for the cumbersome, technical, old-time systems.

You Need It—Everybody Should Know Shorthand

Whether you are a clerk, salesman or bookkeeper—college or high school student—man in the army or navy—a wife or a young woman at home—*learn Shorthand*. It is one of the most valuable accomplishments in business today. It will increase your efficiency amazingly. It will aid you to advance rapidly.

Used the World Over for the Past 25 Years

Paragon is used in the offices of the biggest corporations; in the U. S. Government offices, etc. You can use it for *dictation*, taking down telephone messages, speeches, conferences, sermons, lectures, lessons, court testimony, etc.

Send No Money—Just the Coupon. Study It at Our Expense

The complete Course of 7 lessons is now only \$5—the lowest price for a thorough education in shorthand ever known. Do not send any money in advance, however. *Try it at our expense first.* Simply fill out the coupon below and mail it to us. After you receive the Course, study it for 7 evenings, and if you believe you can be without this precious knowledge any longer, mail it back to us and you will owe nothing. *Send in the coupon or write a letter today.*

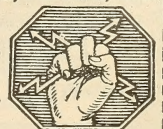
PARAGON INSTITUTE HOME STUDY DEPARTMENT, 601 Broad Street, Suite 301 Newark, N. J.

USE THIS FREE EXAMINATION COUPON

PARAGON INSTITUTE, HOME STUDY DEPARTMENT, 601 Broad Street, Suite 301, Newark, N. J.

You may send me the Complete Course of PARAGON Shorthand with the distinct understanding that I have 7 days after its receipt to either remail the Course to you or send you \$5.00.

Name.....
Business.....
Address..... All-Story-Arg., 11-2-'18



EVIDENCE Of Its Merit

F. G. Cooper, famous Cartoonist of Collier's, writes: "Within a few days after receiving your set of lessons I made all the notes in my pocket note-book in Paragon Shorthand. I had no previous knowledge of any shorthand. Weeks afterward I can read my Paragon notes. It strikes me that this is quite a recommendation for your system."

IN COURT

"With Paragon, which I learned in 7 lessons, I am able to do any kind of work in Court with as great rapidity as the occasion may demand."

J. Martin Hamley, Lake Providence, La.

WITH UNCLE SAM

"It took me one week to master Paragon. My speed in 1 month was 80 words per minute." Bruce Bouguis, 1330 F St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Try This Lesson Now

Take the ordinary longhand letter *d*. Eliminate everything but the long downstroke and there will remain */*. This is the Paragon symbol for **D**. It is always written downward.

From the longhand letter *e* rub out everything except the upper part—the circle—and you will have the Paragon **E**.

Write this circle at the beginning of */* and you will have **Ed**.

By letting the circle remain open it will be a hook, and this hook stands for **A**. Thus */* will be **Ad**. Add another **A** at the end thus */* and you will have a girl's name, **Ada**.

From *o* eliminate the initial and final strokes and *o* will remain which is the Paragon symbol for **O**.

For the longhand *m* which is made of 7 strokes, you use this one horizontal stroke —

Therefore, — would be **Me**.

Now continue the **E** across the **M**, so as to add **D**—thus */* and you will have **Med**. Now add the large circle **O** and you will have */* (**medo**), which is **meadow**, with the silent **A** and **W** omitted.

You now have 5 of the characters. There are only 26 in all. Then you memorize 26 simple word-signs, 6 prefix contractions and one natural rule for abbreviations. That is all.

Loftis Bros. & Co.

DIAMONDS WATCHES ON CREDIT

ESTABLISHED 1853

**Select Your Christmas Gifts from Our
Jewelry Catalog. Send for it Today.**

Our Diamonds are distinctive in beauty, of great
brilliancy, set in the latest fashionable
Solid Gold Mountings.




**DIAMONDS
WIN HEARTS**

**The
Best
Gift
of All**



**We
Prepay
Shipping
Charges**

MEN'S FAVORITE DIAMOND RING
TOOTH MOUNTING

14K

We are offering wonderful values in Diamond Rings, special for Christmas presents, at \$25, \$50, \$75, \$100, \$125. Credit terms, one-fifth down, balance in eight equal amounts, payable monthly. See Catalog.

Suggestions for Christmas Presents

Diamond Rings, Solitaire	\$25 up	Diamond Cuff Links	\$ 5 up
Loftis Solitaire Diamond		Diamond Scarf Pins	8 up
Cluster Rings	75 up	Wrist Watches	15 up
Diamond La Vallieres	10 up	Watches, gold filled	15 up
Diamond Brooches	7 up	Cameo Rings	
Diamond Ear Screws	25 up	Diamond-set	12 up
Diamond Studs	10 up	Vest Chains, solid gold	12 up

Send for Catalog, make selections, and have as many articles as you wish charged in one account. We can fill any requirement. Liberty Bonds Accepted.

EVERY ARTICLE IN OUR CATALOG is specially selected and priced unusually low. Whatever you select will be sent prepaid by us. You see and examine the article right in your own hands. If satisfied, pay one-fifth of purchase price and keep it, balance divided into eight equal amounts, payable monthly. Splendid bargains in 25-year guaranteed **WATCHES** on credit terms as low as **\$2.50 A MONTH**. To the Cash Buyer: While our prices are lower than the cash prices of other concerns, we make a discount of eight per cent for cash in full in advance, or on delivery.

We Have Been In Business Over 60 Years

LOFTIS BROS. & CO.
THE NATIONAL CREDIT JEWELERS
Dept. F-139 108 N. State St., Chicago, Ill.
STORES IN LEADING CITIES

Mr. Edison's Wonderful Amberola

Only **\$100**
**After
Free Trial**

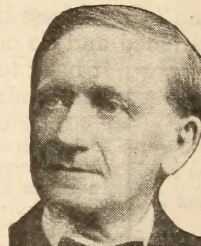


Yes, you may keep this New Edison Amberola—Edison's great photograph with the diamond stylus—and your choice of records, too, for only \$1. Pay the balance at rate of only a few cents a day. Try the New Edison Amberola in your own home before you decide to buy. Send no money down. Entertain your friends with your favorite records. Then decide.

Write Today For Our New Edison Book. Send your name and address for our new book and pictures of the New Edison Amberolas. No obligations—write now while this offer lasts.

F. K. BABSON, Edison Phonograph Distributors
1078 Edison Block, Chicago, Illinois

Don't Wear a Truss



BROOKS' APPLIANCE, the modern scientific invention, the wonderful new discovery that relieves rupture will be sent on trial. No obnoxious springs or pads. Has automatic Air Cushions. Binds and draws the broken parts together as you would a broken limb. No salves. No lies. Durable, cheap. **Sent on trial to prove it.** Protected by U. S. patents. Catalogue and measure blanks mailed free. Send name and address today.

C. E. BROOKS, 212B State Street, Marshall, Mich.

STOPS GRAY HAIR



Thousands of men and women have restored their gray hair in from 4 to 8 days with **Mary T. Goldman's Hair Color Restorer**. Send for **Free Trial Bottle** and make the test yourself. Give the natural color of your hair—whether black, dark brown, medium brown, light brown. If possible, enclose a lock in your letter. The trial outfit—bottle and special comb—will come by return mail. Order the regular size bottle by mail if you prefer not to buy of your druggist.

MARY T. GOLDMAN
314 Goldman Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.
Established 50 Years



Play It 10 Days Free

WE will send you any Columbia Instrument on 10 days free trial. Play on it. Test it in every way. Then, after 10 days time, if you don't find it the easiest blowing instrument in the world—if you do not consider it the best instrument in the world regardless of price—send it back. If you decide to buy you may pay the low, rock-bottom price in small monthly amounts.

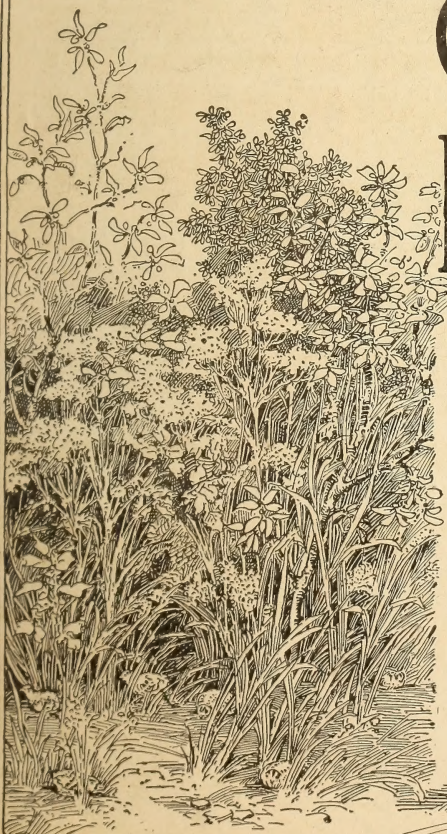
Write Today for New Catalog

You will be under no obligations. The book tells about the great advance made in instrument making and how Harry B. Jay's patented telescopic tubing is praised by bandmen everywhere. Write today.

Harry B. Jay Co., Dept. 1078 542 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago



GET THE HAWK!



And save the game that he is destroying.

Take your trusty gun and go after game enemies; hawks, foxes, weasels, skunks, house cats. They destroy millions of game birds every year. You should hunt them as mercilessly as they hunt down and slaughter their prey.

Get them *now* and help check this wanton destruction of a valuable part of the Nation's food supply. The Hercules Powder Co. publishes a 64 page book, "Game Farming for Profit and Pleasure." It tells you all about the care and propagation of game birds, as well as how to protect them.

This book will be sent to you free on request. Send for it today.

HERCULES POWDER CO.

33 W. 11th Street



Wilmington

Delaware



New Way to Get Diamonds Why Pay Full Prices

HERE you can get diamonds at amazing savings, proved by customers' letters. Diamonds, rings, pins, brooches, pendants, etc., which originally sold at full prices. The exact qualities for which full prices are paid today. You may choose any new mounting you prefer. The jewelry, just as you want it, will be encased in a handsome gift box, and you can try to match it at full 60 per cent more.

Diamond Banking A house nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ century in one location and rated over a million dollars, in the business of diamond banking—or lending money on high grade diamonds, watches and other jewelry—offers *genuine bargains*. If the money we lend is not repaid we must sell the goods that were placed as security.

Try to Match at Full 60% More

Guaranteed Cash Loans

A most remarkable feature of the diamonds bought here—like an insurance policy—you know what you can borrow before you buy. See our

Cash Back Guarantees

Many unpaid loan diamonds which originally sold for full prices, we offer at most astoundingly low prices, actually regardless of their real original value. Can you afford to let such opportunities pass by?

Let Us Show You These:

- \$180** This ring is a gorgeous beauty, exactly suited for lady. The diamond weighs 1 less $\frac{3}{16}$ carat of blue white color, perfectly cut. Try to match at 60 per cent more.
- \$48** This solitaire cluster has every appearance of a 2-carat solitaire. An exact duplicate of platinum 14-carat white gold ring. Try to match this, too, at 60 per cent more.
- \$89** This ring is a right up-to-date hexagon mounting. It is a fine blue white diamond, $\frac{1}{2}$ — $\frac{1}{16}$ carat. An amazing saving.

Sent on Approval

We'll be glad to send you prepaid, on approval, without obligation, any of our bargains for *Free Examination*. See them!

Send for Jos. DeRoy's Bargain Bulletin

Jos. DeRoy & Sons

Only Opposite Post Office

1644 DeRoy Bldg., Pittsburgh, Pa.

Gentlemen:—Please send me absolutely free and prepaid, your new Bargain Bulletin of diamonds, watches and other jewelry. It is understood that I assume no obligations of any kind.

Radically different from the ordinary catalog. Hundreds of special bargains are listed in this new bulletin. Send coupon for it today. Not just one quality of diamonds, but all qualities are shown in this remarkable bulletin. Find out how you can get diamonds from us at full 60 per cent savings. Write at once. Name and address on coupon or post card is enough.

Jos. DeRoy & Sons

Only Opp. Post Office

1644 DeRoy
Building,
Pittsburgh

References
by permission:
Farm-
ers' Deposit
Nat. Bank,
Marine Nat.
Bank, any
Pittsburgh
daily
Newspaper.

Name

Address

